





Ozark Post Office



JOHN HENTON CARTER
(Commodore Rollingpin)



CARTER & BRO
St Louis
1899

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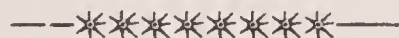
TO LORENZO E ANDERSON AND
FESTUS J WADE AS A SLIGHT
TOKEN OF RECOGNITION OF
MANY ACTS OF KINDNESS WITH
THE GRATEFUL AFFECTION OF
THE AUTHOR



OZARK POST OFFICE



Lo, the spirit of hate is abroad
in the land,
And the ties that should bind are as
one with the sand—
For the curse of the sire has come
down to the son,
And the land that we love, for the
time, is undone!



IT was in the early spring time. The mail, which arrived at the village every evening, had just been distributed, and the usual crowd, drawn together by the occasion, were in attendance. Deacon Riddle, the postmaster, a tall, angular man of fifty, with a kindly face, and a merry twinkle in his eyes, was waiting upon callers.

“There must be a woman at the other end of this correspondence,” he remarked

OZARK POST OFFICE.

in a jocular manner to John Gregg, a well-known attorney, who was among the first to present himself at the delivery window, at the same time handing him the expected missive.

“Possibly,” rejoined the other, as he stepped back to make room for those who were pressing forward. Several rustics who heard the Deacon’s remark, chuckled at his futile attempt to draw the lawyer out, and leered at him as he made his way from the room with a look common to those who have little to divert their minds.

Those given to the study of character would have discerned in John Gregg’s composition the elements essential to a successful career. He was temperate, cool, methodical, and above all, impressed every one as a person with a fixed purpose in life. He was a hard student, going out very little socially, though this fact was no doubt largely owing to his

OZARK POST OFFICE.

habits of strict economy, which were imposed by his straightened circumstances, for his practice was not large.

In personal appearance, John Gregg was of medium stature, dark hair and eyes, and not over thirty-two years of age. His complexion was pale, and his strong nose and chin proclaimed him a person not easily swayed when his mind was once made up, though in his intercourse with the people he was noted for his courtesy and was generally well liked. He settled in Ozark about a year before the beginning of the civil war, and that tremendous event was now on the eve of precipitation. A number of enthusiastic young men had already left Southwestern Missouri for the purpose of joining organized forces in the South, and others were forming themselves into companies and drilling, who cherished the same hostile intentions. John Gregg, however, took no part in

OZARK POST OFFICE.

the controversy, but attended strictly to his own affairs.

At length sectional animosities reached a point when it became impossible for any one to maintain a neutral position, and even John Gregg, though personally popular, failed to secure immunity from public censure, and his reticence became a subject of remark. Furthermore, it was openly avowed at a meeting held at the court-house, that the Federal authorities at St. Louis were being kept remarkably well posted concerning everything that transpired in the settlement.

“‘Maybe it’s a little bird that’s carrying them the news,’” intimated Major Parr, a wealthy citizen.

“‘If it is it had better fly high and keep out of range,’” broke out Squire Jenkins, another personage of equal standing in the community.

“‘There isn’t any wings or feathers on that anatomy,” said Major Parr.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Public suspicion having been aroused, the names of several persons were mentioned as likely to be guilty of the offence charged. Squire Jenkins suggested that “it would be well enough for them to watch John Gregg.”

Deacon Riddle, however, was inclined to take a different view of the case, and declared, “if there was enough such folks in the country as John Gregg, there would be a chance of settling the difficulty without going to war.”

He was a strong union man and had taken no part in the meeting. There was no denying the fact, however, that John Gregg was hopelessly in the minority.

“Let him express himself openly and above board,” pursued Squire Jenkins, as if in vindication of his former observation. “It’s no time to be a sitting on the fence.”

“That’s what I’ve been ’lowing all the time,” said Elder Watts, with an energy

OZARK POST OFFICE.

that recalled his power as a preacher; "I draw my conclusions from the word, for 'he that isn't for us is against us.'"

The sentiment met with a hearty response, and it was at once determined that John Gregg must either declare himself in favor of the new movement or else leave the settlement.

"We don't care to have dealings with a Yankee, anyhow," insinuated Captain Leavenworth, a wealthy young farmer, whose words were all the more authoritative because of his having already enlisted a company of cavalry for Southern defense.

"That's so," came in chorus.

There were a number in the crowd, however, who still had confidence in John Gregg's integrity, and believed him incapable of a dishonorable act; yet, as it was a custom of the times to subject every one, not already committed to the Confederate cause, to the most rigorous scru-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

tiny—when even the ties of consanguinity formed no barrier to sectional hatreds or political persecutions—no one felt it incumbent to lift a dissenting voice.

II.

Lo, the fertile fields shall
fallow lie—
The ploughsheare rust in the
crumbling shed;
Yet the flag we love shall
never die,
But proudly float when its foes
have fled.

—*****—

AFTER the meeting adjourned, the attendants went, almost in a body, to John Gregg's office, which was near by. When they entered the room there was present, besides himself, a young man of medium stature, and very dark complexion, who was known—in the settlement—as James Braithwait, or, as the "White Indian," the half-breed. He came of a good family and was highly educated, having graduated from an Eastern college. He was financially well to do, and a person of some influence, though

OZARK POST OFFICE.

a man of few words, and very positive in manner. He was also known to be an uncompromising Union man, and his friendship for John Gregg was well understood, a circumstance which served to throw a tinge of suspicion upon the young lawyer's loyalty to the South.

Captain Leavenworth, who took upon himself the responsibility of spokesman, was the first to enter. He was well acquainted with John Gregg, and the meeting between them was open and cordial.

"We'uns all have just had a meeting," said Captain Leavenworth to John Gregg, waiting for a moment for the others to come in, "and—"

"It seems to have been well attended, Captain," interrupted John Gregg, facetiously, as he glanced at the crowd.

White Indian, who was standing by the side of John Gregg, was silent.

Captain Leavenworth hesitated before continuing. The others looked mutely

OZARK POST OFFICE.

on, and altogether there was noticeable about the proceeding an air of formality quite at variance with the free and easy conduct that usually characterized the young men of this period. A single lamp suspended from the ceiling sent a hazy glow about the room and glinted upon a number of exposed pistols—for nearly every one was armed.

Could there have been any doubt in the minds of John Gregg's visitors concerning his ready acquiescence to their demands? At all events there was an anxious look in every eye, a nervous pallor bespread each cheek, and that pulsating silence which momentarily precedes intense action, had thrown over the scene its subtle spell. John Gregg stood in the middle of the room calmly greeting all with his usual stolid smile.

“As I was saying, John,” Captain Leavenworth went on, after recovering from John Gregg's unintentional inter-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

ruption, “we’uns have just had a meeting, and as you have never yet come out point blank which side you’re on, some of the boys ’lowed as how, maybe, politically, you was against we’uns all.”

He spoke in a conciliatory tone and manner, and added, apologetically, “otherwise, John, we’uns all know you’re all right.”

John Gregg gazed at the speaker in silence. The crowd, many of whom were in liquor, pressed forward, making room for several who were yet outside to enter, and all watched the proceedings with intense interest.

“What do you say, John?” continued Captain Leavenworth, presently, as if anxious to have the matter settled.

“Concerning what?” returned John Gregg, with imperturbable coolness, his speech and manner indicating him to be a man of education and exemplary conduct.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“Which side are you on?” pursued Captain Leavenworth, with some show of irritation. “Are you for the North or the Confederacy?”

“That’s just what we’uns all want to know,” cried out one of the crowd, “and no chasing around the bush, neither,” he added, in a tone of assumed authority.

John Gregg’s countenance grew earnest, and as his face was smoothly shaven, every twinge of the muscles could be plainly detected.

For a moment he paced back and forth in front of his small desk, on which lay several books, as if some physical effort were necessary to enable him to restrain his indignation. His cheeks were flushed and his eyes glowed as if fed by some inexhaustible fountain of power that was called by the occasion into full activity.

White Indian eyed the crowd, but said nothing.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

If any had come expecting to see John Gregg cower before their superior numbers and stern demands, they now realized their mistake.

“‘You must give we’uns all an answer, John,” demanded Captain Leavenworth, in a voice that indicated his patience to be well nigh exhausted. “‘We’uns don’t want to stay here all night waiting.”

“Go home, Captain,” pleaded John Gregg, earnestly. “‘It’s time we were all in bed.”

Captain Leavenworth could restrain himself no longer. His youthful impetuosity, coupled with an ardent enthusiasm for the cause he had espoused, at last assumed the mastery of his judgment, and pounding his fist upon the desk, he declared, excitedly, “‘If you ’low we’uns all are going to leave here until we know which side you’re on you’ll find out your mistake after it’s too late.”

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“That’s a fact,” cried out another, with emphasis, the words being re-echoed by all present.

The kindling fire of passion, fed by the fierce spirit of sectional hatred, leaped at once into a consuming flame. The crowd now threw off all restraint and clamored for John Gregg to declare his principles at once or suffer the consequences.

“Maybe that a good coat of tar and feathers might help him to talk,” suggested a voice from near the entrance to the house, the sentiment being heartily cheered.

John Gregg, though still silent, was beyond question wrought into a state of extreme mental perturbation. His face grew livid, the jaws were firmly set, the veins of the neck became visibly swollen and his eyes assumed the glow of uncontrollable anger. Standing erect, and looking his interrogators in the face, he waited until the turmoil had temporarily

OZARK POST OFFICE.

subsided, and then said: "Your demands are as unreasonable as they are unjust. I cannot, without cause, renounce my allegiance to the Government, much less join a movement to destroy it."

At this juncture the throng swayed forward, and a number of cocked pistols were pointed at John Gregg's head, but he seemed to take no heed of his personal peril.

"Let him say what he's got to say," interjected Capt. Leavenworth; "we want to know just how he stands on this question."

"Shoot the Yankee; hang the abolitionist," came from all parts of the house.

The room was now the scene of the wildest confusion, and in the possession of a mob all the more furious because defied.

White Indian motioned the crowd back, at the same time drawing his pistol.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“My life is of small consequence compared with the life of the Nation,” said John Gregg, making himself heard with some effort, “and nothing that could befall me can in any way interfere with the final settlement of this momentous question. No!” he went on with an eloquence that for a moment held even his assailants spell-bound, “The Union must and shall be preserved, and the man who seeks to destroy it is a traitor.”

At this juncture the excitement overleaped all bounds, and the next instant there came the report of several pistols, and John Gregg fell to the floor dead!

White Indian now, without uttering a word, began to fire, and a number of the assailants were seen to fall.

“Kill him,” cried several voices, but after emptying his pistol with deadly effect, he made his escape from the rear.

Amidst the uproar that followed, the lamp was broken setting fire to the house

OZARK POST OFFICE.

which was soon reduced to ashes, leaving the bodies of the slain smouldering in the ruins.

Half an hour later, when the express arrived that brought the daily mail to the village, there was among the passengers a handsome young woman, accompanied by a little daughter, apparently ten or eleven years of age. The woman, after alighting, inquired for John Gregg's office. On being informed of the fire she became alarmed and asked where she could find Mr. Gregg.

“I'm sorry to say, ma'am,” answered Deacon Riddle, who had just gathered up the mail bag, and was in the act of bearing it away, “that he's dead.”

She stood for a moment, staring abstractedly about, and then sank to the ground in a faint!

III.

There was mounting in haste,
and the fervent farewell—
There were sighs, there were tears,
all that passion may tell.
Ah, the wild, frenzied look, and the
disheveled hair
That is tossed as a cloud in
the storm of despair.

—*****—

AS already noted, the usually quiet village of Ozark Post Office had become the scene of the wildest carnage and was wrought up to the highest state of excitement. Beside John Gregg, a number of the most prominent young men in the settlement had perished in the conflict. The body of John Gregg was recognized by his gold watch, on which was inscribed his name. Deacon Riddle buried his remains in his own lot in the village cemetery. The bodies of all the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

others were removed by friends and relatives.

Deacon Riddle took charge of the woman and little girl, who proved to be the wife and daughter of John Gregg, and had them conveyed to his own house, where they were kindly cared for.

The news of the tragedy spread quickly and by midnight hundreds of people had gathered in from the surrounding country to learn the full particulars. Capt. Leavenworth and those of his party who had escaped, circulated among them and explained the circumstances.

“I didn’t think it would come to this,” declared Captain Leavenworth to Deacon Riddle and several other prominent citizens, who were viewing the scene, “and I did all I could to keep the boys from shooting.”

“You were the leader of the crowd,” insisted Deacon Riddle, “and are therefore responsible.”

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Captain Leavenworth flushed at this remark and bit his lips in an effort to control himself. He was evidently greatly moved by the course things had taken.

The original mountaineers were a hardy set, and many of them came of revolutionary stock. They chose the mountains because they had been, from time immemorial, inhabitants of mountainous countries. Isolated as they were, from the progressive influences of civilization, they had on the whole retrograded in the remote districts, but around Ozark Post Office, which was situated in the valley, near the base of the highlands, where the land was fertile, there was considerable wealth and culture. The people, generally, were very religious, although their theology was of that hard and unforgiving species which was common at the time, but which the country has since largely outgrown. The preacher dealt in positive terms—right and wrong;

OZARK POST OFFICE.

eternal life or eternal punishment, was the issue, and the question was, which would the listener choose? Figurative terms were construed to be literal truths.

“This book,” Parson Watts, the leading religious light of Ozark Post Office, was in the habit of remarking, pounding the open volume with his bony fist, “is the word of God. Therefore, it is every word true. If you reject one single sentiment, then you reject it all.” He spoke with a power which was evidently inspired by thorough conviction, and the effect upon his hearers was something akin to that of Richelieu where he threatens to launch upon his enemies the curse of Rome. The church was as intolerant as the Southern slaveholder and quite as exacting.

The less prosperous mountaineer usually did a little farming, hunting, trapping and distilling. The latter pursuit he had been in the habit of carrying on before

OZARK POST OFFICE.

the war, when everything ‘‘run free,’’ and when this avocation became subject to internal revenue tax, he felt that one of his vested rights had been wrongfully wrested from him. He could not see why he should be called upon to pay tribute on his weekly out-put of whisky any more than on his corn and other commodities, and as a result, he was often known to the government officials as a ‘‘moonshiner,’’ and a frequenter of prisons.

Any one not acquainted with the true sentiment as it appeared on the surface, would imagine the Confederates outnumbered the Federals three to one, but this was not the case. The advocates of the Southern cause were largely of a class who had little at stake and everything to gain by the rupture. Many of these were persons of foreign or Northern birth, which fact being known, they were not so implicitly trusted as the natives, and

OZARK POST OFFICE.

in order to prove their fealty, were given to the committing of overt acts, attempting, as it were, to “out Herod Herod.” This was true not only of the Ozark region, but throughout the entire South, where nearly all the negro drivers were of alien birth. Indeed, it is quite probable that had it not been for this element there would have been no war. The real slaveholder, who had everything to lose, was not inclined to precipitate matters.

As may be imagined, the Confederates were very bitter against White Indian, who had slain so many of their number, and swore vengeance against him should he be caught, yet, no one volunteered to attempt his capture. Quiet and unassuming as White Indian was, he had a record in the settlement which made all wary of him when it came to personal conflict. As a member of the vigilance committee organized in the settlement to suppress

OZARK POST OFFICE.

outlawry, which was rampant in the mountain sections during this period, he had often proved his nerve. More than one desperado who attempted to defy the civil authorities, had met their fate at his hands.

By morning the crowd had considerably thinned out, yet throughout the day people kept coming in to inquire after relatives and friends, and ascertain the names of the dead. Later in the day, news got abroad that a company of Federal cavalry, led by White Indian, was approaching. This was a signal for all Southern sympathisers to hasten away, leaving the more conservative element, known as Union men, in possession of the village.

Deacon Riddle was among them. "I wished," he remarked, as he watched the troops dismount, "that they'dve got here a little earlier, for it would have saved a heap of mischief. The woman

OZARK POST OFFICE.

has gone stark crazy, and the child ain't much better; she just cries all the time. Doctor 'lows we'll have to send the mother to the county house where she can be locked up; can't control her any other way, I reckon.'"

Two weeks had now passed since the tragedy. The day before it was decided to send Mrs. Gregg to the poor-house, Deacon Riddle set about looking for a place for the daughter. His own family was so large that he could not well give her a permanent home himself, and he wished to avoid the necessity of compelling her to associate with the class she would be brought in contact with at a place of public charity. The girl was large of her age and unusually attractive. Moreover, he had already discovered that she was well-bred, and educated beyond her years; being a shrewd observer, he had discerned in the daughter great possibilities. The delicate attention she had

OZARK POST OFFICE.

shown her mother from the moment of her prostration, putting aside as far as possible, her own sorrow, that she might all the better administer to her comfort, impressed him very favorably and made him her friend. His wife and family were also greatly drawn towards her. Before entering upon his mission, Deacon Riddle had thought over the matter, and made up his mind as to who would be the most likely to take the girl, for it was evident she had not been brought up to work and would prove of little service to any one unless to act as a nurse or companion for a child. The Parr's, who were wealthy, and owned the adjoining farm, he concluded to visit first. The family consisted of Major Parr, his wife and two children, Walter, in his eighteenth year, and Rosa, aged two. There were also several servants and a number of slaves about the place. Major Parr and Walter had left on the arrival of the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Federal troops to cast their lots with the South. As the servants were all colored the Deacon argued that an intelligent white girl would be a more suitable companion for little Rosa, and Mrs. Parr was not long in arriving at the same conclusion, so that an arrangement was soon concluded. Mrs. Gregg had not recognized her child since the first night of her illness and was not conscious of their separation, when, on the next morning, she was removed to the county house and her daughter left her side to take up her abode with strangers. The parting, however, was none the less affecting to those present. Deacon Riddle attended personally to their removal. After greeting Mrs. Parr, he introduced the child as Alice Gregg. Mrs. Parr received her kindly, and noticing she had been weeping, spoke some words of comfort. Presently she directed a small colored girl to show Alice to a room next to her own.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

When the two had departed Mrs. Parr turned towards the Deacon, who was a leading light in her own church, and who was highly thought of, and exclaimed, “I reckon the girl ain’t to blame if her father was a Yankee. At all events, she’ll have to be taken care of by somebody. And they say that Gregg didn’t hurt anybody, but that it was White Indian that did all the mischief. Well, I’m glad,” she went on thoughtfully, “that none of our folks were mixed up in the affair.” She folded her hands on her lap and waited for an expression of opinion on the part of the Deacon, whom she knew to be very conservative, as he never would own or employ slaves.

“It was a sorry affair,” he said, after a brief silence, “and Mrs. Parr, this ain’t going to be the last of it. You remember the fable of the lion. It was as harmless as the lamb before it accidentally tasted blood.”

OZARK POST OFFICE.

The remark nettled her, and her black eyes flashed as she answered, “No, I reckon that they’ll not be satisfied until they’ve robbed us of everything an’ freed all the slaves; that is, if they’re able; but we’ll see about that,” she went on, in a tone of defiance, “but what’s the news?”

“Oh, the whole country’s roused, and war is certain. Lincoln has called for seventy-five thousand men to defend the flag and preserve the Union, and—”

She sprang to her feet and interrupted him: “And what else?” she demanded, “for if there’s anything that threaten’s disaster to our cause you are sure to know it.” She walked to the window, where she stood for a moment gazing outward, and then resumed her seat.

Deacon Riddle watched her closely. Though they differed politically, they were life-long friends, and he greatly admired her for her sterling character;

OZARK POST OFFICE.

and above all, for her beauty. which was remarkable. She was of the brunette type, tall and lithe of figure, under forty, and highly educated. In spite of the idiomatic flavor of her speech, which was inherited, none wrote a more beautiful hand or spelled more correctly. Letters can convey but a feeble idea of the charm of the Southern dialect at its best. It is indigenous to the soil, and has not, as some imagine, anything to do with bad spelling or ignorance. It is soft and flowing, and possesses an evenness of tone which is delightful. Moreover, it always seems to suggest more than it tells, leaving much between the lines to be thought out. Still it is all old, primitive English on the most part, for the South has not added a new word to the language. “Tote,” imagined by some to be a creation of the Southern negro, occurs often in Shakespear, and other works of that or an earlier period.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

The same is true of “dote.” “Waal,” for “well,” “ther” or “thar,” for “there,” are equally ancient, and so one may go over the list. During the four years of war between the North and South, this peculiarity of speech was closely studied by the scouts of the two armies; and to remain silent when spoken to was always taken as an evidence of a desire to conceal something. “We’uns all,” uttered by one born of the soil, and inheriting its peculiarities, can never be successfully counterfeited by a Northerner. The words may be there but the flavor, which, as already indicated, is the charm, will be wanting.

“And what else?” she said, noticing that the Deacon was not disposed to be communicative.

“Well, there’s nothing, I reckon, Mrs. Parr, that you’d care to know. I don’t take any pleasure in hurting your feel-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

ings. What there is to say is bad for your side."

"An' what is that?" she questioned, eagerly; "I'm not afraid to know the worst."

"Well, Camp Jackson, St. Louis, has surrendered, and Seigel is enlisting the Germans to put down the rebellion."

In a moment she was on her feet again. "And you'll welcome them, of course, when they come here to despoil us."

She waited for an answer without removing her eyes from his face.

"Yes," he rejoined, reluctantly, as if not wishing to wound her feelings, "but I shall do my best to have you and yours protected. And it'll not be a bad thing, you'll find, I hope, to have one friend that has influence with your enemies."

Mrs. Parr resumed her seat and became calm. Her sixty slaves, many of whom she and her husband had inherited,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

were still loyal, though less industrious and cheerful while at their daily tasks. Knowing that the war was about themselves they grew suspicious, and were disposed to eavesdrop and listen to discussions, and take counsel from a class whose chief delight it was to stir up dissensions that would serve to weaken the power of the opposition. Yet there was no general, open rupture till after the emancipation proclamation was issued.

At last Deacon Riddle took his departure. Though still defiant and uncompromising in her attitude towards the North, or the Yankees, as she called them, Mrs. Parr accompanied him to the door as if loth to create a breach that might forfeit his good will, and thereby lose whatever influence he might otherwise exert with the authorities in her behalf. She was a true type of the high-born Southern woman, and above all, possessed tact.

IV.

They met in the field, in proud
martial array,
Ah, where battles are lost and
are won!
One wearing the blue—the other
the grey—
In the greatest war under
the sun!

—*****—

BEING alone and unoccupied, Mrs. Parr now turned her thoughts to Alice, whom she had brought into her presence, for the purpose of instructing her as to her duties as a member of the household. From the little she had seen of the child, she had already formed a very favorable opinion of her, though to be sure she regarded her in the light of a servant only. One thing that impressed her above all else was Alice's apparently cheerful disposition, in spite of the terrible ordeal through which she had so re-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

cently passed, and from which she had by no means recovered. She gave little outward evidence of her sorrow; indeed, her conduct in this respect was so marked that it attracted the attention of Mrs. Parr, who, for a time, was at a loss to account for it on any other theory than that of indifference. It did not require many hours of close observation, however, to rid her mind of this delusion. She soon made the discovery that Alice's conduct was the natural sequence of a strong character and great self-control. She was neither weak or emotional in her nature, and moreover, her good breeding never for a moment forsook her. Young as she was, she realized her position, and resolved to make the best of the circumstances.

Little Rosa, whom it was her duty to care for and amuse, had already proven a source of comfort to her. Then, the place itself was attractive. The mansion,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

which was large, was surrounded by a well-kept lawn, and an abundance of flowers and shrubbery, while a number of native pines served to amplify the shade, yet leaving the sun free to penetrate to the other thrifty growths. Close at hand was a garden containing an arbor, over which grew vines, now laden with grapes in a half matured state, and underneath all stretched seats, running the entire length, on opposite sides. This cosy retreat soon became a favorite resort with Alice and little Rosa. The view, especially at this season of the year, when nature is at her best, was charming. The Osage, winding through the fertile valley below, much of which was owned by the Parr's, threaded its way leisurely, and in every direction could be seen orchards where the trees were bending beneath the weight of the luscious fruit for which the country is noted. And yet, in spite of all this, and

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Alice's apparent cheerfulness, her mind was elsewhere. The death of her father had been a severe blow, but she realized that with him all was over. He had passed into her life as a pleasant memory, a sweet dream never to be forgotten; but not so with her poor demented mother. The thought of her being incarcerated in the poor house among unsympathizing strangers, almost crazed her, and often when alone, she was unable to suppress her sorrow. Strong natures are said to weep inwardly, and who shall speak of the fountains of tears that flow unseen? So the humdrum of life went on. Occasionally Alice would hear from her mother but the news was not encouraging. The best that could be said, and it served in a measure to soothe the child's heart, was, that she suffered but little. As she regained strength she became possessed of hallucinations common to persons of unsound mind, and which the All-wise

OZARK POST OFFICE.

power seems to vouchsafe them as a balm, diverting where it cannot heal, and thus, as it were, bridging the chasm between the overthrowing of the intellect and the final dissolution of the casket which contains it. Meanwhile, Alice sought consolation in the performance of her duties, in books, and particularly in the Bible, which she read daily. She also accompanied Mrs. Parr on the Sabbath to the church, and early connected herself with a class in the Sunday School, an institution that she had loved from the time she could remember, and with which she was familiar. Here she met regularly, Deacon Riddle, who continued to show her every kindness and keep her informed as to the condition of her mother, he having business at the county house nearly every week, in the capacity of a director.

As the war progressed sorrows came to others of the vicinity, and while these did not in the least lessen her own grief,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

they served to arouse her sympathies, broaden her views, and give her a better understanding of what life is. She saw the troops triumphantly on their way to battle, their banners waving, heard the cheers that proclaimed the eagerness for the onslaught, even once caught the sound of the heavy artillery, and later learned of the carnage that brought sadness and mourning to more than one neighboring household. She saw again, the scene changed; the funeral cortege, the trailed banners, heard the muffled drum and the solemn march, proceeded to the open grave, heard the few words of comfort spoken to breaking hearts, saw the earth shut out forever the last vestige of some ambitious youth whom they said had died for his country.

More than this, she noticed, young as she was, for her own self-dependent lot had made her eager of observation and old in years, that as the summer waned,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

the leaves and flowers withered, and the earth took on a sombre hue; that the moving human world kept pace as well, and assumed a similar tone. There was no more the usual gayety; people talked cautiously in subdued tones, and sables bedecked every home. Environed, as Alice was, there was nothing for her to do but bear up and let things take their course. Hope, which is seldom prone to leave the human heart, is ever present with the young, for, say what we may, we count the years. Gazing backwards Alice realized that but a step separated her from her earliest recollections and the present, while beyond a great, untried world spread out before her. Each decade marks its own peculiar period of development. The blood claims kinship with all nature and falls without effort into its own fitting environment. Animals in their youth prefer children to older people. She had read in her Bible, and

OZARK POST OFFICE.

heard it repeated in Sunday School, that all is vanity, and while she could not be expected to recall the fact that the sentiment was uttered by one who had made life's journey under very auspicious circumstances, and should be thankful for the fair sailing and delightful trip, she preferred to try the experiment for herself. Her splendid physical health and well-poised mind aided her in reaching this conclusion. So, notwithstanding her misfortunes she was still disposed to cling to life with tenacity.

She had already made the acquaintance of a number of the colored people on the place, two of whom, Uncle Jerry and Aunt Martha, who were house servants, she had become much attached to. They were both of a very religious turn of mind and found sympathetic companionship in "little Mistis Alice," as they called her. The old couple were married to each other and had come as an inher-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

itance to the family. Neither of them could read or write and their little knowledge had been gained by listening to others discuss matters, and from the minister, whom they willingly never omitted to hear. Often in the evening, when the labors of the day were over, Alice would read to them on the back porch from the Bible or the newspaper, as the case might be, and every word that fell from her lips was eagerly devoured. They were not ignorant of the fact that their race was the real cause of the prevailing sectional conflict, yet they could not bring themselves to see the necessity of it, or imagine why the colored people should wish to be free.

“‘Perhaps,’” said Alice to Uncle Jerry one day, when they had been talking on this subject, and he seemed perplexed and appeared to be in a deep study, “‘they may not all have as good a master and mistress as you and Aunt Martha.’”

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“I nebber thought ob dat, Mistis Alice; mebbe yose right; we hab alus libed wif quality dat we could look up to, an’ mebbe some doan have it. Wese belonged to our mastah an’ missus alus, an’ wouldn’t know how to git ’long wid-out ’em.”

He lifted his face and turned to his old wife for a look of approval, but she kept her eyes on her knitting and said nothing. Their honesty, and steadfast belief in the final triumph of the right and the utter annihilation of the wicked, was a source of much comfort to Alice, who had been brought up in a similar atmosphere. Another attraction for Alice was the family library, which was very complete. Here she found such books as she had been accustomed to read, together with the current magazines and newspapers. The parlor also contained a fine piano, and Mrs. Parr encouraged her to practice her music, so that when the time

OZARK POST OFFICE.

should arrive she might be able to instruct little Rosa. The few tunes she knew were mostly sacred, and she cultivated little else, well knowing that under the circumstances levity illy became her. Often when she was performing Uncle Jerry and Aunt Martha would come into the hall and listen. "Nearer, my God, to Thee," seemed to be her favorite. The air was in striking contrast with the martial strains which came from the military camp beyond, yet it seemed fitting and appropriate. Sometimes soldiers in passing would pause to catch a few notes, which no doubt reminded them of home and loved ones far away.

V.

And the beast of prey shall
 come once more
To his own—the primeval
 plan—
The woods resound with the
 old-time roar,
And nothing be hunted—
 but man!

—*****—

AS time wore on the war became gradually further removed from Ozark Post Office, with the exception of guerilla fighting, though every fall a general raid would be made into the State by the Confederates for the purpose of securing supplies. On these occasions the Federals would be temporarily driven back along the border, and the Confederates come into possession of the Southwest.

Captain Leavenworth and his company of cavalry always took advantage of this opportunity to visit their old home, and

OZARK POST OFFICE.

circulate for a brief time among their old friends. Each return, however, showed a great falling off in the number of his men. Many died from dissipation, and others had fallen in battle or been killed by sharp-shooters while scouting. Captain Leavenworth, himself, had lost an arm. The diminution in his ranks was noted by the Unionists, who were cognizant of the murder and commented on as a just retribution to those who had taken part in the act. It was further intimated by some that White Indian was largely responsible for this great mortality. He and his chosen comrade, a mountaineer by the name of Zeb Posey, had taken an active part in the struggle from the very start, and many stories were current of their daring exploits. Posey was a tall, slender man of thirty, with oval features and a tremendous hawk nose. He was a dead shot and as fleet footed as a deer. It was said of him and White Indian that

OZARK POST OFFICE.

in a day's journey in the mountains they could distance the fleetest steed. It was only as a scout that Braithwait was known as White Indian, and no one ever addressed him otherwise than by his name. He would not tolerate familiarity and none ever attempted it. Even Posey regarded him in the light of a superior officer, and obeyed him as such.

Development for some time in Southwest Missouri was downward. The fields went uncultivated; the public roads, except those used for military purposes, were neglected, and became almost impassable. School houses were closed, churches but lightly attended, and, as if to furnish additional evidence that the tide of human affairs was rolling backward, wild animals became more numerous than ever before known, even by the oldest settlers. The little stock the two armies in their ravages had spared, was constantly being devoured by beasts of

OZARK POST OFFICE.

prey, and even human life was endangered. All this was the natural outgrowth of the situation. For four years and upward, no one outside of the military service was permitted to carry arms, and the report of a gun in the woods was an offence that called for an immediate investigation by the provost guards.

Two years passed and still Mrs. Parr had not seen the Major or her son. They were with Lee in Virginia. Occasionally she heard from them through one who had been captured and paroled, for many were already tired of the service and were availing themselves of this means of getting rid of it, or by letters smuggled through the lines. Meanwhile, the emancipation proclamation had been issued, and most of her slaves were gone. Some of them had enlisted in the army. A few of the older men and women remained on the place and worked on shares, or for wages. Uncle Jerry and Aunt Martha

OZARK POST OFFICE.

refused to acknowledge any change in their condition, and continued loyal. Very naturally, those families who had relatives in the Southern army were regarded by the Unionists with suspicion, though on the surface everything seemed serene, and persons and property were respected. Socially, the two factions had little to do with each other, though in business affairs the line was not so closely drawn. The farmers brought in their products and disposed of them for cash, or exchanged them for such articles as they needed. All were required to take the oath of allegiance and procure a permit if they wished to carry anything whatever through the lines. While the majority of the men of suitable age were in the army, the women staid at home, a circumstance which greatly relieved the monotony of camp life, as their presence inspired order among the troops, for notwithstanding their aversion to the mili-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

tary, they conducted themselves in a manner which won the esteem and respect, even of those between whom there could be no sympathy in common. If they could not be approached on terms of friendship or intimacy, they could be and were admired at a distance.

War, with all its horrors, has never succeeded in divesting a handsome and accomplished woman of her power of fascination, and the better class of Southern women possessed this faculty to a remarkable degree. They were born to command and could ask a favor or a kindness with a grace that made it a real luxury to serve them. Mrs. Parr was a conspicuous example of this type. The most trivial trespass by any of the troops upon her premises was sure to result in the summoning of an officer, and no matter in what frame of mind he might enter her door, he invariably left it her friend. She was above all things a womanly wo-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

man, and with all her strength of character she seemed always to be seeking the sympathy of some one in whom she could confide, and on whom she might rely. The person who chanced to hold her attention for the moment was quite apt to imagine himself without a rival in her esteem. Her art was intuitive, the highest art, and charmed without apparent effort.

About the house the daily routine of life went on. In the village the school had been re-established, and Alice attended and made good progress. She could not be expected to be happy, and yet she was far from complaining or brooding over her sorrow. Her mother had regained, largely, her strength, but her mind was almost a blank. At times she seemed to have a vague recollection of her daughter, but her talk was rambling and incoherent, and lacked continuity. At one moment her eyes would

OZARK POST OFFICE.

seem to regain something of their old-time intelligence, but the next they were blank and expressionless. The only consolation Alice gained from her frequent visits to the county house was that she became convinced that her mother suffered no pain. And yet, in this respect, she reasoned, she might be mistaken. Had she not herself, on many occasions, experienced torture when under the influence of dreams or seized by nightmare, when she, too, was in perfect physical health. She shuddered to think that perhaps her mother at this moment might be in the clutches of some such monster. Ah, who can tell? Certainly, none have returned from the gloomy precincts of madness to explain. Those that recover do not bring with them the memories of blighted years. Happily, these belong to oblivion.

Deacon Riddle and his wife were frequent visitors at the Parr mansion, as

OZARK POST OFFICE.

well as his two daughters, who were the class mates of Alice at school. Here, also, she met a number of boys of her own age, and altogether the time passed pleasantly. Associations were formed that strengthened as time progressed, and she began to attract to herself a little world that was not without its sunshine. Occasionally she was invited out to a party given by some of the less prominent people of the neighborhood, when she would be escorted home by a certain one of her school boy friends, who managed to get ahead of others who were anxious to perform the same service, and they would be certain to take the longest path, and still have a good deal to say after reaching the gate and the time came for parting. There was not much going on in that vicinity that interested them; it was not that which detained them. No, it was an indescribable interest they felt in one another that drew them together.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Each might manifest the same interest in another, for that matter, for they were not in love. Alice enjoyed company, provided it was of the right sort, but she disliked rudeness and shrank from familiarity. Her mother always impressed upon her mind the necessity of holding herself aloof from undue advances. She had recounted her own experience in this respect and informed her that her father never kissed her until after their marriage. The gentlemen of the old school were particular to instruct their daughters not to be too easily won. It is not the apple that is in every one's reach that is prized the highest. All of this Alice remembered and clung to. She received many marks of courtesy from the younger officers of the army, but was careful not to return them. One day a lieutenant, who had performed some service for Mrs. Parr, and who had been on speaking terms with Alice for quite a

OZARK POST OFFICE.

time, offered her his hand as he approached to greet her. She drew back and refused to receive it. He flushed, and showed plainly that he realized his awkward position, and never attempted anything of the sort again. Mrs. Parr was before her as a constant example. Not only in her general deportment, did she demonstrate her superiority, but in her dress and the neatness of her person. Maj. Chadwick noticed this from the first, and was wont to say, when speaking of her to his friends that she was the only woman he ever knew that was always on dress parade. Still she never affected anything of this character. Her apparel seemed as much a part of her as the calyx is of the rose.

VI.

Where the sombre shadows creep
Silently upon the lawn,
And the morning glories peep
Through the dewdrops at the dawn,
He shall lowly lie and wait
Unattended through the years,
And oblivious to fate,
Praise or blame, sighs or tears.

—**~**~**~**~**~—

AS may be imagined, in a community where nearly every family was represented by one or more of its members on the field of battle, there was ample cause for mourning. Evidence of sorrow was always conspicuous. There were few women, outside the wives of the officers stationed at the post, who were not clad in black. Mrs. Parr at last came to it. One morning the papers announced that Major Parr had been wounded and captured at Gettysburg, but a second report brought the intelligence of his

OZARK POST OFFICE.

death. Walter Parr, who was with the same command, escaped unharmed.

Deacon Riddle, notwithstanding that he was a strong Union man, went East and brought the Major's body home for burial. His standing as a staunch friend of the North enabled him to perform the duties undertaken without delay. The news of Major Parr's death completely prostrated Mrs. Parr, and it was feared for a time she would not survive the shock. She was unable to leave her bed on the day of the funeral. Only a few old neighbors, some of whom were bitterly opposed to the part Major Parr had taken in the war, followed the remains to their last resting place. Parson Watts conducted the services and paid a handsome tribute to the character of the deceased, which even his enemies admitted, barring the one mistake that brought on his death, was well deserved. He was a splendid type of the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Southern gentleman of the old school, and honorable in all his dealings with his fellow men. No one questioned this, yet the acrimonies growing out of the war served to repress much of the expression of sympathy which otherwise would have been apparent. Uncle Jerry and Aunt Martha were unconsolable, and all of the former slaves of the family who had not left the neighborhood, were in attendance at the funeral. The burial took place in the afternoon. The sun had already sunk behind the mountains and was tingeing, with his parting rays, the summit of the high embankment that rose on the opposite side of the Osage, leaving the intervening space enveloped in an unbroken shade. Flowers and fruits were abundant everywhere, and birds flitted about and sang in the numerous primeval trees which had been spared to do guard duty in the humble abode of the dead. Others had been laid there

OZARK POST OFFICE.

recently, as the many little mounds of red earth attested. On some of these graves the floral decorations were still fresh. Again they had played their little part and were taking their places with the dust, which claims kinship with all beneath the sky.

At the grave Parson Watts made a few appropriate remarks. It was evident, from his tone that he still believed in the righteousness of the Southern cause. He belonged to the Methodist Church South, which had brought to the sectional conflict its moral and religious support, sanctioning slavery, and withdrawing all communication and allegiance from that larger and more influential body of the denomination in the North who opposed holding man a chattel. By the Southern church generally, of whatever denomination, the Bible was quoted in defence of the institution of slavery. Sermons were preached to over-willing ears, and evi-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

dence produced from Holy Writ proving its divine origin, which could not be answered, and never were. Struggling truth has ever been opposed by logical argument. It operates through the sentiments mainly, and succeeds after every human effort has been made to crush it.

Decon Riddle always maintained that slavery made bad white men. It tended to encourage caste, idleness, dissipation, created a community of fawners, and rendered impossible a noble and independent manhood.

Alice and little Rosa accompanied the remains of Major Parr to the cemetery. They went in the family carriage with Uncle Jerry and Aunt Martha, and before leaving the grounds she took occasion to visit the grave of her father and lay a wreath upon it. Only a plain headboard marked the spot, though he had lain there three years. Once Alice brought her mother to the grave, but as she failed to

OZARK POST OFFICE.

comprehend anything of its meaning, the circumstance only added to her own sorrow.

One unacquainted with the intensity of the Southern character, and the hatred the people who had been despoiled of their property bore the North, would imagine the great affliction which Mrs. Parr had suffered would tend to crush her spirit and humble her pride, but such was not the case. For a time, her health gave way, and she remained secluded at her home, but at length she was again seen about the place looking after her affairs. Nearly every day old Uncle Jerry would drive her out, and on Sundays she would attend church. She was always accompanied by Alice and little Rosa. Robed as she was, in becoming black of the costliest material, she was more beautiful than ever. Nothing can add such a charm to the face of a woman as that look of sad resignation

OZARK POST OFFICE.

which is born of some great bereavement. All are unconsciously drawn toward it, and recognize its irresistible power. Major Chadwick had called at the house quite frequently during Mrs. Parr's illness, to inquire after her health, and at last, when she began to receive visitors, he was invited in, and made a brief stay. He found her as charming in manner and conversation as ever though less piquant. Her demeanor was more subdued, and somewhat saddened, but it only lacked occasion to prove that the spirit was unbroken. When he offered some becoming words of condolence for the loss of her husband she thanked him, but added, "I am aware, better than any one else, what I suffer in his loss. No one can ever fill his place with me. And yet, I shall bear my fate without complaint. He died for a cause we all love and believe to be right, and his death is sanctified."

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Major Chadwick felt the awkwardness of his position. He knew that his uniform proclaimed him the avowed enemy of the cause she so revered, and he felt that his sympathy as well as all the acts of kindness he had bestowed upon her, though accepted as a service, were despised. And yet he admired her all the more. When at length he took his departure, he mounted his horse and rode over the village, apparently reviewing the troops stationed about the post, but his mind was elsewhere. It wandered back to the days of the Spartan mothers, but found little in common to attract him here, for their patriotism often led them to sacrifice their beauty and finer womanly instincts, while in her later sisters he saw all these qualities in perfect harmony. Perhaps, he reasoned, this accounts for the bravery of the men, and inspires them to fight so gallantly for their loved ones.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

While Alice was almost constantly in attendance on Mrs. Parr, it was only in the position of a servant, or governess for little Rosa, and the fact that she was of Northern birth, and the daughter of an inmate of the poorhouse, was never lost sight of. Still, she never referred to the circumstance in conversation when it could be avoided. She recognized the girl's superiority to others similarly situated, and did everything in her power to encourage her, even to sending her to school and providing her with a music teacher; but all this was done without breaking down the social barrier which rose between them. As the entire family, since the death of Major Parr, were clad in black, Alice was generally taken by those who were not familiar with her history, to be Mrs. Parr's daughter. She was in every respect her equal in personal appearance and lady-like deportment, and strange to say, they did

OZARK POST OFFICE.

not look unlike. Both possessed the straight, broad nose which distinguishes Grecian art, and were perfect brunettes. When some one imagining them to be mother and daughter, chanced to mention their resemblance, Mrs. Parr always seemed pleased, as she knew it was equivalent to saying that she was handsome, to be told she resembled Alice. Women are generally not averse to compliments, and in this respect Mrs. Parr was no exception, although she regarded them as an evidence of the good judgment of her husband, who was ever uppermost in her thoughts. His portrait hung over the parlor mantel-piece, and every one who entered the room was sure to see it. It was the face of a high-bred man of the Virginia cast of features so common throughout the South, and especially among the landed proprietors and professions. In either case they usually inherited more or less property, and pos-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

sessed the faculty of retaining and increasing it without much apparent effort. In their conduct toward the gentler sex, they were noted for their courtesy and marked consideration, and as husbands they seldom came under the ban of suspicion.

VII.

The storm-tossed ship shall
 come at last
To anchor in the peaceful
 bay,
But not the sailor whom
 the blast
Cast to the mercy of the
 spray.

—*****—

THE war had now been in progress for nearly four years, though the only evidence of it around Ozark Post Office was the ever presence of the military, as the raids upon the place had long since ceased. The people had become accustomed to the tattoo, the evening gun, the officious guards and the pompous officers in their highly decorated uniforms, and while all this was very distasteful to many they were too wise to give any outward evidence of their displeasure. Parson Watts modified his sermons to meet the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

condition, and never referred to the existing conflict, unless to express the hope that it might soon cease. Squire Jenkins, in his lengthy prayers, was equally reticent on this subject, though Deacon Riddle lost no opportunity to express his patriotism before the congregation. Socially they were friends and close neighbors and political acrimonies were not permitted to come between them. Beside, the Deacon having influence with the authorities, had often been of service to them. He was not a person to harbor animosities or dislikes, especially when they sprang out of temporary conditions. He used to say, when questioned as to his opinion of the two factions which at the time divided the country, that there was a good deal on both sides to be taken into consideration, and then he would add in his quaint, original way, "I reckon if you'd put them in a bag and shake them up, and sift them, that they'd come

OZARK POST OFFICE.

out about all alike.” Even Mrs. Parr, with all her inborn dislike for the “Yankees,” as the Northerners were termed by the old regime, when referred to by themselves, was often moved to smile at the Deacon’s apt way of putting things.

White Indian was often seen in the village, and once had met Alice at Deacon Riddle’s house, and described to her the terrible scene on the night of her father’s death. He told her, in his quiet way, how he was present on the occasion, and did his best to save her father, but “there were too many of them.” Then he added thoughtfully, “there are less of them now.” As he said this, his black eyes flashed, and Alice gathered their import, for she had already heard of his exploits, and his fame as a scout was current gossip. He always wore citizen’s clothes and could adapt himself to any disguise. Being a native of the settlement he was perfect in the current dialect, which,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

however, he could discard at a moment's notice, and become the cultured man of society. In his scouting he was very cautious when meeting any one, to wait until he had spoken, in order to satisfy himself whether he was of Northern or Southern birth. On one occasion he suddenly came upon three men on horseback whom he at once discovered to be Confederates, when he cried out, "hurrah for Jeff Davis, you damned rebels." The salute was returned with vim, and White Indian continued, "There's a lot of the boys over there in the corn field, and they've got some good whisky; come over and let's have a talk." Two of the men rode in the lead and the other at his side. Just before they came to where the men were secreted, he requested the man next to him to let him look at his gun. White Indian examined the weapon a moment, and then shouting so as to attract the attention of his associates,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

he covered the two soldiers in the lead with his pistol, and quietly remarked, "We are Federals; surrender." The captured trio proved to be dangerous guerillas.

White Indian was on familiar terms with the Parr's, though the animosities growing out of the war had caused them to sunder all social intercourse for the time being. Why he should have taken the course he did was a mystery, as he certainly belonged to the patrician element. Again, his ancestors, on the one hand, had been despoiled of their possessions by the very flag that he now so vigorously defended. But he was three-fourths anglo-saxon, and perhaps this accounted for his conduct. Mrs. Parr, with all her aversion for the cause he had espoused, admired him. Aside from his one blemish, as she termed his Union proclivities, he was her ideal of a man. Brave, handsome, intrepid and self re-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

liant, he easily won his way to the hearts of the gentler sex. Even Alice was impressed in his favor during their brief meeting.

Mrs. Gregg's three years confinement at the county house had brought no perceptible improvement in her mental condition. In the main, she was quiet and tractable, but at times she was subject to violent spells and had to be confined.

Every few weeks Deacon Riddle would bring her in his buggy to see Alice, whom she seemed to vaguely recognize, though she took no interest in. These visits were always very affecting, yet Alice felt it her duty to be near her as much as possible, and her own experience had already taught her that many of the duties of life are unpleasant. The attentions she gave her mother were unappreciated, yet she was always repeating them, in the hope that a change might come for the better.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

A noticeable feature in the general aspect of affairs at Ozark Post Office was the large number of cripples. Some of these had belonged to the Union army, though most of them were ex-Confederates who had managed to get home and take the oath of allegiance. On Saturdays, when the country people came to the village to do their trading and inquire for mail, these unfortunates were very much in evidence. Young men hobbling in and out of buggies and wagons, with an arm or a leg missing, or otherwise maimed, gave proof of the havoc the war had already created. But the spirit of braggadocia and pride which characterized this element at the beginning of the conflict was gone. The flags which they proudly bore, and the uniforms that proclaimed their defiance of the government were things of the past. The storm had spent its fury and now came the calm. The struggle for existence was renewed

OZARK POST OFFICE.

on the old basis, and the rigid rules of economy imposed by poverty and debt, served as the last feather to crush any outward sectional distinction that might still exist. Blue became the common wear, and the cast-off clothing of the Union troops did civilian service, among all but the wealthy, until the stock was exhausted. But beneath all this, there was still smouldering much of the old spirit of hatred. Many of the Confederates were not, and probably never will be fully satisfied that they had been squarely beaten, and they were slow to admit their error and assimilate with the Unionists. They stood aloof, drew the line, and voted as one man, and from the ashes of the conquered rose the solid South. The only ones that really harmonized were the unfortunate tramps from the two armies that had already begun to swarm about the country.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Ozark Post Office had its full share of these, and it was said that the first olive branch of peace of which the village has any record, was laid upon a beer table in Taggard's saloon the day two maimed soldiers, under the pressure of penury, sat and talked over their battles, and agreed to forget the past. Ozark Post Office was emerging, but the process was tedious.

Deacon Riddle's inexhaustible flow of humor did much to soften the asperities the sectional strife had engendered. One day when a number of persons were discussing issues that he held to be closed, and his opinion was asked in regard to them, he answered, "I've quit studying much about the past. It's the dinner that's to be provided for to-morrow that's engaging the attention of this intellect just now." Again, on meeting a worthy young man of his acquaintance who was under the influence of liquor, he laid his

OZARK POST OFFICE.

hand upon his young friend's shoulder, and remarked, in all seriousness, "A spree, Charley, can be opened up on a very small capital, but there isn't money enough in the country to put it upon a paying basis." The Deacon was a constant source of annoyance to Parson Watts, who detested humor, although apart from this one failing, as the Parson called the Deacon's propensity for saying odd things, they were on the best of terms. At prayer meeting one evening, the Parson had, in his remarks, enlarged considerably on what he termed the "drift of things." Deacon Riddle listened to the discourse with his usual attention, and when the divine, as was his custom, came to the office next day for his mail, he greeted him good naturedly, and said, "I liked your remarks last night very much, but to my mind the most dangerous tendency of the age is, the falling off in the circulation of pump-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

kin pie. It has long been apparent to me that the average American freeman, especially in this neighborhood, is not getting as much of this native product as the framers of the Constitution intended he should have. What you want to do, Parson, is to set the women straight on this point.

VIII.

After the storm then comes the
calm,
After the night the
day;
After the strife the warrior's
palm,
And then the peaceful
sway.

—*****—

SOcially, Ozark Post Office was in a chaotic state. The old regime maintained its exclusive attitude; the new comers, those who had followed the wake of the army for the purpose of engaging in trade, and who were already quite numerous, made up a set of their own, or affiliated with the troops, to whom they were largely indebted for their patronage. The population had grown to two thousand, and Ozark Post Office was enjoying a period of "flush times." The old local paper, which had advocated secession, had taken occasion

OZARK POST OFFICE.

to carry its views into practice at the approach of the Union forces, and moved South, but a new organ, fully in sympathy with the progressive spirit of the times, had been established and was known as the Clarion. The editor was a tall, slender man of thirty-five, by the name of J. Hobson Webber. He was of a literary turn, and wore the traditional long, unkempt locks, and threadbare Prince Albert coat. He also carried on his person a pair of eye-glasses, which he wore on public occasions, but never when at work, a circumstance which gave rise to some comment, though the mystery was never cleared up, and the village finally came to regard the glasses as a necessary adjunct to his profession. In addition to being a poet of repute in the neighborhood, Mr. Webber was also famous as a humorist, and his jokes and witticisms served as a fruitful theme for discussion between the reports of battles,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

which, of course, always overshadowed everything else for the time being. Webber was so well aware of this fact, that whenever he was obliged to publish a piece of startling news, he would reluctantly withdraw his own effusions from the issue and hold them over for a more opportune occasion. He used to say that he didn't care to be "covered up," as the showmen term it when the opposition puts up more paper on the boards than themselves.

Deacon Riddle, who was a warm personal friend of Webber's, noticing these omissions in two issues of the Clarion, called at the office one day and made inquiry as to the cause of the discrepancy. Webber explained, and then added, assuming a profound look, which seemed to hint, "there are more of these goods in stock if you desire them." The world, Deacon, is profoundly moved by overshadowing events. Be careful not to die

OZARK POST OFFICE.

on the same day that some greater man dies if you desire your funeral to attract much attention.

The only time that Deacon Riddle ever seemed to be really offended at Webber was during his second canvass for postmaster. In addition to securing the signatures of all the prominent persons of the village to his petition, he had requested Webber to exert the influence of the press in his behalf, which he cheerfully agreed to do. For a time everything went on satisfactorily, but one day the Deacon came into the office of the Clarion in a very excited frame of mind, bearing in his hand the latest number of the Journal, and approaching the editor, remarked, "What kind of a paper do you call this, anyhow?" pointing with the index finger of his right hand to a paragraph; "here I am spoken of in the most complimentary terms, and on the opposite side of the sheet the party to which I

OZARK POST OFFICE.

have the honor to belong is denounced most unmercifully. Besides," he continued, in the same spirit of adverse criticism, "I notice similar discrepancies in regard to political matters. Here you are Republican and advocate a high protective tariff, and in another place, Democratic, and advocate free trade."

For a time Webber was perplexed, then he said, after a moment's reflection, "I think I see through it all; wait a minute." He disappeared and presently returned. "This explains it all," he said, as he proceeded to spread out a copy of a Democratic sheet published in an adjoining town, "we have got the wrong bundle of paper from the St. Louis office; you see, we only print half of it here."

"It beats anything I ever heard of," growled the Deacon, as he turned to leave the office.

"It does, for a fact, Deacon," said Webber, and then, breaking into a laugh,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

he continued, ‘ ‘I guess it’s the first time that one set of principles were ever backed by another.’ ’

Squire Jenkins and Webber were not on good terms politically, yet they never engaged in controversy. The Squire was well advanced in years, and his conservative training counseled self suppression. He took the paper, and gave it what advertising he was obliged to—mostly legal—such as deeds of trust and sales, and received with the rest his share of local notices, for the editor had a nose for news, and was always on the look out for items. Even when Major Parr was brought home for burial, he laid aside sectional and political prejudices, and published an editorial condoling with the family. His income was meager, but he drew consolation from the fact that he was of some consequence in the village and a factor in all that went to the making of what is best in life. Another quality

OZARK POST OFFICE.

possessed in common with his craft, was his love of appreciation. This was more to Webber than money, of which he was always short. Not unfrequently, when his weekly bundle would arrive from the "patent outside office" in St. Louis, he would be obliged to borrow the amount due on it from Deacon Riddle. On one occasion, when greatly depressed, he called on the Deacon and explained the difficulty he found in making ends meet, when the Deacon slapped him on the shoulder and said, in his good natured, cheerful way, "keep going, my friend. I have always noticed that a mired team will pull through a place it couldn't back out of."

Webber's desire to occupy a conspicuous position in the eyes of the people, prompted him to make sacrifices out of all proportion to results possible of attainment in his limited field of action. This characteristic, however, is common

OZARK POST OFFICE.

to many very useful people, and is met within all departments of human activity. Besides events of the past clearly prove that the improbable sometimes comes to pass and nothing is attained without effort. Webber was a believer in this kind of logic. He evinced the same spirit and energy in conducting his country weekly that he would have done had he been at the head of a great metropolitan daily. He seemed to imagine himself called to the work he had undertaken and brought to his task an enthusiasm and honesty of purpose which merited success. He advocated numerous town improvements, established literary societies, and denounced corruption, even at the cost of losing patronage. One day Webber was accosted by the keeper of a saloon who expressed his views very pointedly concerning churches and morally inclined people generally, when the editor calmly replied, "My dear sir, did it ever occur

OZARK POST OFFICE.

to you that these influences to which you so strenuously object are protecting you at this very moment? Remove them, and these same people, whom possibly you imagine to be your friends, would destroy both themselves and you in short order. You kindle and feed passion which you are unable to control, but which the law, the very essence of all that is moral and just, can, and does.”

Webber was of the imaginative, impracticable class. He was given to writing impossible love stories, both in prose and verse, which many of his uncultured readers thought to be of unusual merit, though Deacon Riddle, who was shrewd and practical, and well informed, often ridiculed the editor for occupying valuable time with such vague fancies.

“Why, all great works in art,” replied Webber, “are imaginative.”

The Deacon was silent for a moment, as if collecting his thoughts, and then

OZARK POST OFFICE.

broke out in his droll way, "Well, I reckon, young man, that your imagination is all well enough when it comes to writing poetry and novels, but when I want to know just how peaches and cream tasted last year, I call for a dish of the current crop."

IX.

Full many a lovelorn swain
shall seek
The shrine of the maiden
fair,
But the queenly brow and
damask cheek
Shall be pressed by lips
elsewhere.

—**~**~**~**~**~—

AT the Parr mansion things went on as usual. An addition had been made to the household by the introduction of a young lady from Boston, whose duty it was to instruct Rosa and Alice in music. She had been recommended by Major Chadwick on account of her superior merit, and was known as Miss Agnes Parks. Mrs. Parr, herself, had been partially educated in Boston. The Southern women, with all their refinement and elegance of manner, which was the result of generations of wealth and freedom

OZARK POST OFFICE.

from toil, were always dependent upon their Northern sisters for their training. They regarded all this, however, as something that could be bought and paid for, and it carried with it little more obligation than any other business transaction.

“Boston,” Deacon Riddle remarked to Mrs. Parr one day, after being introduced to Miss Parks, sends us her ethics in exchange for our corn and bacon; brain culture for our agriculture. She plays well,” he went on after she had left the room.

“Very well, indeed,” rejoined Mrs. Parr, with enthusiasm; “she is a fine performer.”

“Well, Mrs. Parr,” said the Deacon, “I admire music generally, and don’t object to the piano, but as far as my experience goes, the women that have the strongest hold on their husband’s affections don’t do their best work on that

OZARK POST OFFICE.

instrument. You had better teach Alice something more substantial.”

“Oh, she never could work,” rejoined Mrs. Parr, “besides she could do better teaching, and she’ll be very capable.”

At this juncture, Major Chadwick was announced, and the Deacon withdrew. The Major had called, as was his custom, every few days, to pay his respects to Mrs. Parr, and inquire if he “could be of any service to her.”

“You might mail this letter, if you please,” she said in her most agreeable manner, “as I wish it to go out this evening.”

He received the missive as if it might be a priceless treasure entrusted to his keeping, and placing it gently in his side pocket, assured her it would be attended to.

“And what’s the news?” she inquired, assuming an expression which seemed to say, “nothing can be good,” and which

OZARK POST OFFICE.

he felt, became her better than her more cheerful moods.

“Nothing later than published in the morning papers,” he rejoined, “and I imagine you have read them.”

“No,” she said, “I have not read them; hardly ever do; they contain little that is encouraging to me or mine.” She lifted her eyes to Major Parr’s picture, and noticing her action, Major Chadwick was prompted to gaze in the same direction. “I was only thinking,” she resumed presently, recalling herself; “do not think me rude, but you know I live much in the past. The real live, active world is little to me. I turn from it to feed upon a memory.”

Major Chadwick lowered his eyes and remained silent, but his mind was busy. He was a gentleman and a patriot, and loved the flag under which he served, but in spite of himself felt his manhood slipping from him in the presence of this

OZARK POST OFFICE.

woman. He realized for the second time the awkwardness of his position and resolved never to enter the house again. He feared his presence was a constant menace to her peace of mind. He rose to leave, but she requested him to not hasten, as it was yet early in the afternoon. Her tone and look somewhat softened now, amounting to a command, and he resumed his seat. From that on the conversation became spirited, the past seemed to have been forgotten, and they lived in the golden present. The spell for the moment was broken, and forgetful of self, she became, unconsciously, the irresistible, refined woman that had enslaved him from the very first. She tapped a bell and Aunt Martha entered the room. "Aunty, you can bring the Major some wine," she said, glancing at the old servant; "it will serve to revive his spirits."

OZARK POST OFFICE.

When the wine was placed upon the table, she daintily filled a glass and handing it to him said, "Excuse me, Major, but I never indulge in the luxury, and if I did, it wouldn't be proper for me to drink with a Yankee." She laughed, and looked so charming that he was at a loss to determine whether the whole proceeding was intended as a compliment or a rebuke. He took the cheerful view, however, and felt his manhood returning. Miss Parks, Alice and Rosa, who had been enjoying themselves roaming about the place for an hour, returned looking as fresh and beautiful as the flowers they bore in their hands, for it was in June, and everything was in bloom.

The Major complimented the young people on their personal appearance, and remarked that he must be going. When he was in the act of leaving, Mrs. Parr called to Miss Parks, who was seated at the piano, "Play something for the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Major, Agnes; give him my favorite.” He paused to catch the air, out of compliment to the lady of the house, but when she struck up “I wish I was in dixie,” he laughed, and remarked, “I guess I’m in the wrong camp.”

It was fully half a mile from the Parr mansion, which was just outside of the village, to the camp where the Major had his headquarters, and as he rode leisurely, he revolved in his mind the incidents of the afternoon.

“She is a puzzle, anyhow,” he mused, “and I don’t understand her, but perhaps women are never understood, and I certainly prefer her society to all others.” When he considered how foolish it was for him to waste his time upon a woman that from her own confession had no heart to bestow on any one, he mentally resolved to see her no more.

In returning to camp he had taken a circuitous route in order to breathe the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

fresh air, and by the time he reached the business part of the place, and dismounted for the purpose of mailing her letter, he saw her carriage approaching. In a moment his resolution was gone, and he stood waiting until the conveyance came up, when she alighted and entered the post office. On recognizing him she said apologetically, "I did not intend to go out to-day, Major, but Miss Parks desired to do some shopping, and so we concluded to take a short drive." He had removed the letter from his pocket and held it in his hand ready to drop it into the box. Noticing the act, she said, "here is another, if you please." He took the letter and mailed the two, assisted her to the carriage, and bowed to Miss Parks, Alice and Rosa. Uncle Jerry was driving and had the team under good control. "By the by," she said, as Major Chadwick was about to depart, "You spoke to-day of some news that

OZARK POST OFFICE.

was in the morning papers, and I'm anxious to know what it was."

"Oh, I had reference," he said, drawing near and speaking in low tones, "to the appointment of General Grant to the supreme command of the army, and ordering him East to oppose Lee."

Her vivacity was gone in an instant, and her features assumed an expression of sadness. He felt that he had made a blunder, and was about to apologize, when she inclined her head, and said, "good evening, Major." She then gave Uncle Jerry her instructions and they went on their way.

Then he watched Mrs. Parr until she disappeared from view, when he mused, "It seems impossible for me to do anything that will please her, but her moods are delightful."

X.

Our flag shall wave as it
waved before,
And none shall its power
defy;
The welkin ring with the grand
encore
For the cause that cannot
die.

—*****—

MAJOR CHADWICK was a bachelor and under forty-five. By profession he was a lawyer. At the breaking out of the war he was in possession of a profitable business in Boston, his native city, but on the first call for troops he closed his office, enlisted a company of infantry in the volunteer service, and was elected their Captain. When Fremont was placed in command of the Department of Missouri, his company was ordered to St. Louis, and later on, he was made post commander at Ozark Post

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Office. He was a tall, well built man, with dark hair and eyes and wore a moustache and goatee, after the military fashion of the time. His manner was quiet and unassuming, and in personal appearance he was prepossessing. His service consisted of some guerilla fighting and in the direction of a number of scouts, whose mission was to scour the country and keep the authorities at St. Louis informed in regard to the movements of the enemy. Among the principal battles in which he took part was Wilson's Creek, where General Lyons lost his life. For his gallant conduct on that occasion he was brevetted Major.

Missouri, by this time, was well rid of both armies, and as there was but very little activity in military circles, things about the post began to drag. The principal employment of the troops was that of bringing in illicit distillers and enforcing the revenue tax. Reconstruction

OZARK POST OFFICE.

of the social system was already at work, but it made but little progress. The people, while they were law abiding and respectful to each other, would not fraternize. The Clarion was active in trying to bring about harmony and build up the village, which, according to Webber's views, was destined to become a great trade center. Now and then he would be moved to say, though he was not given to vindictive writing, that a few first class funerals would be a good thing for the village, yet he would have been the last man to select a victim for the sacrifice. True, those who stood in the way of progress, and who usually stand in the way of it, were the property holders. This class would not, willingly, expend their money for the benefit of others, and furthermore, they could not see the necessity for reform. The roads were poor, and in the winter season almost impassable, but they had been used to this

OZARK POST OFFICE.

since time immemorial, and could wait until these natural conditions were reversed by natural causes.

Deacon Riddle, in this respect, was a good deal like the rest. When urged one day by Webber to use his influence with the authorities to have the main street of the village repaired, he said, "I don't like to make myself conspicuous in such matters. I have always enjoyed the reputation of being a good fellow and easily pleased;" then, as an afterthought, he went on, "and I guess that's the reason why I'm still wearing a cotton suit at all wool prices."

"That's just it, Deacon," remarked the editor.

Military operations in the West and South being pretty well wound up, all eyes were now directed to Virginia where Grant was facing Lee.

Mrs. Parr was naturally much interested in this campaign, as her son was

OZARK POST OFFICE.

an active participant in it. She learned daily from the papers that the slaughter was great, but as the names of the fallen on the Southern side were not to be obtained, she was ignorant as to Walter's fate. This uncertainty worried her very much, yet she gave no outward evidence of it except to express, when the occasion arose, a more intense dislike for the Yankees, and the cause they represented. Major Chadwick, aware of her solicitude, ceased to call, feeling that his presence would suggest unpleasant thoughts, for, however friendly they might be socially, the higher instinct of honor proclaimed them enemies. He passed her several times when out driving, during the period of the fierce battles in the Wilderness, lifted his hat and went on his way. At last, when news came of the surrender, and word was received of her son's safety, he ventured to visit her again. He wished to be one of the first to con-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

gratulate her on her good fortune, and so expressed himself, and yet he noticed she received him coldly. "Yes," she said, after hearing him through, "my son is saved, but the cause is lost. Fate is against us, yet, could I reverse it by the sacrifice of my boy, I would cheerfully part with him."

The silence that followed became them both. At length Major Chadwick suggested, "At least, Mrs. Parr, all is over now, and it becomes all patriotic citizens to put aside the past and look to the future."

"Future," she repeated, looking sadly at the picture of her late husband, "what future have I? Realities have become shadows. I can only sit and think of what I was and might be, had it not been for this cruel and unjust war."

Major Chadwick felt the thrust and dropped his head significantly. "You have your children to live for," he ob-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

served presently, “and I trust many years of usefulness yet before you.”

She laid her hand upon the arm of her rocking chair and gazed vaguely about the room as if to collect her thoughts, when she caught the strains of a familiar tune issuing from the piano in the parlor, separated from the library, in which they were seated, by a wide hall. It was Alice, playing her favorite, “Nearer, my God, to Thee.” Miss Parks and little Rosa occupied the sofa near by. During the playing Mrs. Parr leaned her face upon her hand and gazed upon the carpet. Her face wore the sad expression which had so often attracted him before, and he was drawn towards her with a sympathy which he felt it difficult to restrain. Yet, he knew that he was powerless to comfort her, and that any advances in this direction would have been an insult. With a woman’s instinct she saw he suffered, but her pride sealed

OZARK POST OFFICE.

her lips and she seemed to take real comfort from his pain.

The revelation was not novel to Major Chadwick, and yet it was none the less to be regretted. Many a time before his hopes had been crushed, and as often revived. He realized that he was but clay in her hands. Still, to be able to afford her even a moment's pastime was a pleasure he cheerfully courted. With a feeling of utter despair he rose to go. She looked at the clock and assured him it was not late; he was not accustomed to leaving so soon. Her eyes brightened and seemed to express a wish—or was it sarcasm? He was at a loss to decide. At all events he resumed his seat. “It was very kind of you to call,” she went on, resuming her most charming manner, “and really, I don’t know, Major, how I shall get along without you, now that the war is over, and of course, you will return home.”

OZARK POST OFFICE.

He was not sure that she was sincere, yet he grasped at the straw and saw one chance for life. He took it cheerfully. "Oh, I trust we shall not be altogether strangers in the future," he ventured. "My sojourn here has been very pleasant, and I have become much attached to the place and the people. I come, I must acknowledge, Mrs. Parr, to conquer, but I fear it will all result in me, myself, being made a prisoner."

It was the first bit of banter he had ever attempted, and he watched her face closely to see its effect. Her long, black lashes drooped, and she grew thoughtful. He felt rebuked, and regretted his words, but not knowing what to say, he kept silent. Presently she turned towards him and said, "I had formed a very poor opinion of the Northern soldiers, Major, but I've somewhat modified my views since I come to know you. You have shown me many courtesies not necessa-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

rily due me from your position, and I assure you your thoughtfulness is very much appreciated. In your new field of action you will bear with you my best wishes for your future happiness.”

There was nothing in her tone suggestive of emotion; on the contrary, her demeanor was severely reserved and appeared to him to be final. Still he did not accept it as such. He clung to the hope that in love, as in other affairs of life, there is always a possibility, however remote, that some one may succeed where others have failed, and he would not despair of winning her heart. When at last he took his departure, she saw him to the door and they stood for a few moments gazing about upon the pleasant scene. Then he lifted his hat and said, “good bye.” “No, not that, Major,” she rejoined, in her most charming manner, but “aurevoir.”

XI.

The clash and clamor of war
has passed,
And silent again, the bugle's
call;
But he sleeps well, and his
sleep shall last,
And his sword shall rust upon
the wall.

—**~**~**~**~**~**~—

AT last all evidence of hostilities had departed from Ozark Post Office. Relics of the conflict, however, remained to remind all of the ordeal through which the country had passed. The internal revenue law, in all its manifold ramifications, had come to stay. Everything was taxed and licensed, and a vigilance was exercised in enforcing the law that proved very distasteful to the community and went far to convince the people that the war had been one of conquest, and they were now reaping its baleful results.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

The mountaineers, accustomed to carrying on their various pursuits without molestation, objected strenuously to the scrutiny of the revenue officers, whose vigilance often led to bloodshed. Zeb Posey, who had rendered invaluable services to the government as a scout, was one of the first to be brought in for evading the law. Following the example set by many others, Posey always distilled his own whisky, and even while in the service, managed to keep a supply on hand, and was careful, when on his trips, not to get too far away from his base of supplies. The first time that Zeb was arrested, Major Chadwick had not yet left the post, and the old scout appealed to his superior officer to be released. The Major heard what he had to say and then turning to his captor asked of him what evidence he had of Posey's guilt? "He has a bottle of the stuff now in his pocket," returned the officer.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“Let me see it,” said the Major, addressing the prisoner. Posey complied with the request, when the Major poured a quantity of the liquor into a glass and drank it with the air of a connoisseur, as if to test the quality. When he had finished he turned to Posey, and said, “Did you make that whisky?”

“Yes, sir,” was the answer.

“Then why do you refuse to pay the tax on it?”

“I don’t make it to sell, sir, and I don’t think I ought to tax myself for my own work.”

“But it’s the law, and you must comply with it.”

Posey seemed greatly perplexed, but the Major came to his relief, and said, “Well, Zeb, I’ll let you off this time, but you must be careful hereafter, for I will not be here to intercede for you if you get into trouble.”

OZARK POST OFFICE.

After the troops left business fell off, and there was a general complaint of dull times. The Clarion noticed this editorially, and Webber called at the post office one day to discuss matters with his friend Riddle. He said he feared he'd lose what little commercial standing he had in the community if things did not soon change for the better. The Deacon cast upon the editor a benevolent look, and placing his large hands upon his thighs, said, "keep your trace chains stretched, young man, and the world won't notice what you are loaded with, but if you once strike the down grade, and commence to hold back, everybody will want to see what you've got in your wagon."

Webber saw the point and went back to his work determined to hold out if possible. His humor, however, grew to be less spontaneous, and his witticisms were not always shorn of their sting. He evidently began to realize that his efforts

OZARK POST OFFICE.

in behalf of the village were not appreciated, or at least were not rewarded as he felt they should be. His Prince Albert coat, which had long shown the effects of constant wear, became so slick that, moved one day by the instinct of the true humorist, he referred to himself in a paragraph in his paper, as “a shining example of rural journalism.”

Webber's pride at last gave way, and he finally donned, with the rest, the cast off blue overcoat, which combined, he was wont to say, when referring to the circumstances which compelled him to lay aside all pretence as to dress, “Patriotism, comfort and economy.”

Webber's funny stories were nearly all drawn from his own experiences. He put his own follies and shortcomings into print as the acts of others, and imagining them to be creations, felt the pangs which he had endured under less auspicious circumstances, vanish amidst the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

laughter they had been instrumental in evolving. This faculty is possessed in common by the true humorist. He never gets quite rid of the cap and bells. He always pities himself and does his own weeping.

Capt. Leavenworth returned to Ozark Post Office at the close of the war. He was the last survivor, as far as known, of those who took an active part in the shooting of John Gregg. White Indian, or Captain Braithwait, as he was always called, met him a few days after his arrival home. Others were present when they came together, and it was thought there would be trouble, but the Captain, after gazing at the one armed soldier for a moment, and noticing his empty sleeve, quietly remarked, "Captain, I reckon you have suffered enough; let bygones be bygones."

Squire Jenkins' connection with the Gregg episode ceased at the court-house.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

He did not go with the others to the young lawyer's office. His conservative instincts taught him caution, and warned him that extreme measures might be resorted to, and he never engaged in these from principle. Acquisitiveness was his dominating faculty, and all others were subordinated to it. He was not of the robust type of manhood. In personal appearance he was tall, angular and very slim. His features proclaimed his Virginia origin in the breadth of the lower part of the face and the well developed chin. At a glance one would pronounce him a man that was accustomed to handling property, and expert in all the minor details which serve to make up the trustworthy financier. But, as Webber was more than once heard to say, he was "not a person to be approached for a small loan unless one was prepared to attach a mortgage to it." The Squire owned about half of the village, and had

OZARK POST OFFICE.

profited greatly by the boom that followed the advent of the troops, yet he would not admit it. Webber owed him several months rent for his office, and was continually puffing him in the Clarion, in palliation of the offence, but the Squire kept up his vigorous dunning, in the face of all personal compliments. The editor was not vindictive, yet, when the "first class funerals" hinted at in the interest of Ozark Post Office rose in his mind, he always associated Squire Jenkins with the procession.

Deacon Riddle, though a good friend of the Squire's, when displeased with his narrow-mindedness on certain occasions, was wont to refer to him as a "seedling," that species of fruit which springs from planting the seed, and is lacking in all the luscious qualities that distinguishes the product of the engrafted and cultivated tree. In the church he was a power and gave liberally to its support. Here

OZARK POST OFFICE.

again, his feminine qualities asserted themselves. He loved the order and quiet atmosphere which usually pervades the sanctuary. Moreover, the straight and narrow path fitted his organism and his training. He possessed little conception of innovation, and distrusted all who approached him with anything new. Even his religion was of the old style, and it was said that he had Parson Watts retained because he never read anything but the Bible or listened to a religious discussion. They were both about sixty years of age, and were drawn together by bonds of sympathy which emphasized their faith in the common brotherhood of the church. And strange to say, that while they were always in the minority, yet they were always in power. Their steadfastness of purpose and unquestioned probity never failed to carry them through emergencies. Such men are not popular. They are like the snow that is

OZARK POST OFFICE.

ever present on the mountain peak. The sun's rays beat upon it without apparent effect, yet underneath the frosty exterior comes trickling down the welcome moisture that nourishes the tender flower, and moving onward keeps alive the stream that turns the mighty wheels of commerce. The real, underlying forces of life partake of this nature.

Before taking his departure, Major Chadwick paid a parting visit to Mrs. Parr, though their attitude towards each other underwent no change. He spoke of the possibility of their not meeting again, when, instead of assuming the sad expression he imagined befitting the occasion, and which he so much admired, she broke into her happiest mood, and treated the matter with the greatest levity. "Why, Major," she said, "you musn't say that; seas will not divide us, and if they did," here she paused, as if to give him the opportunity to fill out the

OZARK POST OFFICE

sentence, but he was too much bewildered to make the attempt. "You are always doing the unexpected," he said inwardly. Recovering from his embarrassment, he ventured, "Should you visit Boston I trust you will send me your card. I shall be delighted to call."

"Bye the bye, Major, while I think of it," she interrupted, "I wish you would do me a little favor."

"I am at your service, Mrs. Parr," he rejoined, bowing.

"Thank you," she said; "I knew you would." He inclined his head again, when she went on :

"I would ask you, if you please, to make some inquiry about Alice's family, if the opportunity occurs. She has relatives, she informs me, in New York City, or had when she and her mother left there some years ago. The name is Gregg. I do not wish to disturb the girl's mind by letting her know that I have de-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

cided on this course, so I wish you to write direct to me, if you should gain any information on the subject.’’

‘‘I shall give the matter my earliest attention, I assure you, Mrs. Parr,’’ he said, at the same time feeling his hopes revive as the mission would open up an opportunity for him to correspond with her.

He looked at his watch and said, ‘‘The train leaves in half an hour, and I must bid you good by.’’

‘‘Good by, Major,’’ she replied, as they parted at the door. As he took his way down the walk to the gate, he murmured to himself, ‘‘I rather like the way she said it.’’

XII.

They have done with strife, and
it is not death
That confronts them now on the
fertile plain;
They have come to inhale the
harvest's breath,
And to gaze on the fields of
golden grain.

—*****—

THE war was the great iconoclast—the blow that struck the shackles from the slave also enfranchised the white man of the South as well. Up to the very hour that the Federal forces took possession of Ozark Post Office, neither the freedom of the press or of speech were tolerated, and never had been. One would imagine that under such restrictions there could be little progress, but there was progress and development after a fashion. Slave labor, throughout the entire South, was made available

OZARK POST OFFICE.

where white labor was out of the question. The fine plantations that face the Mississippi and lie adjacent to it, were dug out of the swamps by the blacks. From the pestilential marshes they created that almost continuous garden, which for a century or more, was the wonder of the world. The slave felled the giant trees, cut and split them into fuel for the steamers, and brought his master the gold which served to add links to the chain that held him and his brothers in slavery. His two hundred and fifty years of servitude unquestionably placed the South, as far as material growth is concerned, centuries in advance of what she would have been without him. This service should entitle him and his offspring to share with others an equal right to the soil.

Ozark Post Office, like the rest of the South, took no note of this. The slave had served his purpose and must shift for himself. Without education, training

OZARK POST OFFICE.

or any of the qualifications that could contribute to his success, he went forth to make the attempt. Many of the able bodied men of this class drifted to St. Louis, and went on the river as roustabouts. A number of Mrs. Parr's freedmen were among them.

It was early in May when Major Chadwick took his departure and midsummer was now at hand. He had written one letter to Mrs. Parr, but it was only to inform her that his military duties still confined him to Boston, and he had not yet visited New York to perform the mission entrusted to him. When the letter came she was seated on the front porch, in conversation with Mrs. Riddle, who had come up to spend the day. She glanced over the missive and remarked good humoredly, "A letter from my Yankee friend," but at once changing the subject, went on, casting her eyes down the main road that ran past the house:

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“There comes poor Mrs. Gregg again; it seems that they can’t keep her in the county house without her escaping every few weeks and roaming about the country. I’m afraid, as Deacon Riddle has remarked, that she will have to be confined in an asylum.”

“The place would be far more fitting for her,” acquiesced the other, sympathetically.

By this time Mrs. Gregg had reached the gate, and was gazing abstractedly around as if undecided about entering. She was a delicate looking woman, about thirty-five, and rather poorly dressed. Her features were well formed, although haggard and lacking in intelligence, and yet, on a second glance, there was something about her that impressed one favorably. In the main, her conduct was quiet and orderly, though she had a habit of talking to herself, as if yielding involuntary expression to some all absorbing

OZARK POST OFFICE.

subject that had taken permanent possession of her brain.

“Alice,” called out Mrs. Parr to the young woman, who was now in her seventeenth year, “here is your mother.” She waited till Alice appeared and continued, “you had better try and get her to rest awhile, and then I will have her taken home in the carriage.”

“Oh, mother,” cried out Alice, as she threw her arms about her neck and gave her a kiss, “you have been roaming over the country again. Why do you do it?”

Her mother offered no explanation or defense. She was evidently mentally incapable of giving an intelligent account of herself. Besides, exhaustion and exposure had left their marks upon her frail form. She tottered as if about to fall.

“Come in and rest yourself,” pursued Alice, tremulously.

Entering the house they ascended the stairway and soon came to Alice’s room

OZARK POST OFFICE.

on the second floor. Weary as was Mrs. Gregg, it was not until after much persuasion that Alice induced her mother to lie down.

For a time she tossed about in a restless manner, but after partaking of nourishment became quieter and finally went to sleep, and Alice sought seclusion beneath the shade trees in the back yard. The ordeal was not new to Alice, though its recurrence was all the harder to bear since it was plainly to be seen that her mother was rapidly failing, and with a heart overflowing with fearful forebodings, she gave herself up to sorrowful meditation.

The day was bright and cheerful; the flavor of the new mown hay came from the adjacent field, where a quail concealed amidst the abundant harvest was arousing the echoes by its exultant calls. Other species of the feathered tribe flitted about overhead or frolicked upon the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

recently shorn sward. A humming bird paused for a moment in its flight, above a cluster of rosebushes, which caused the chickens to utter a cry of alarm, and gaze with averted eyes into space, as if to assure themselves of their safety. The persistent tapping of a woodcock resounded from the forest beyond, mingled with the plaintive cry of a lamb that had got lost from its maternal companion and was making a strenuous effort to find her in the grazing flock. Glimpses of the Osage river were caught here and there as it crept noiselessly through the narrow valley and disappeared in the mountains beyond. As midday approached and the shadows contracted, the drowsy cattle in the pasture huddled closer about the trunks of the trees, keeping up a vigorous stamping and an unceasing switching of their tails, as if to accelerate their own tardy movements.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Alice, in the meantime, having stolen to her room, and finding her mother still sleeping, became calmer. She was sitting upon a rustic bench in the shade, expecting every moment that her mother would waken, and planning how to get her back to the county house before the day closed, as she knew she would not return of her own accord. On the contrary, she was in the habit of eluding the vigilance of her keeper, and wandering away from her place of abode, sometimes spending days among the inhabitants of the mountains before being apprehended and brought back. In a settlement where the harmonious current of events was rarely disturbed by innovation, it was not strange that her personal appearance should attract attention.

Certain proprietors of illicit stills which she was accustomed to pass in her perigrinations, were at first inclined to look upon her with a tinge of suspicion, but

OZARK POST OFFICE.

in time, the entire community came to regard her as a harmless imbecile.

“‘It’s only crazy Mrs. Gregg,’” they were wont to say on seeing her approach, “‘a sarchin’ for her ol’ man.’”

In her more lucid moments she still retained a vague perception of her own past life, and upon the all absorbing subject which possessed her enfeebled intellect, the memory of her dead husband, she at times talked quite coherently.

It was seldom, however, that she spoke so as to be understood. A majority of the people familiar with her utterances, were accustomed to treat them as the vagaries of a diseased brain, though a few of the knowing ones bit their lips and exchanged glances.

“‘It’s hard on the widow,’” reflected Capt. Leavenworth, one day, on seeing Mrs. Gregg pass the field where he was engaged, “‘but it couldn’t be helped, and they say all’s fair in love and war.’”

XIII.

But when he gazed into her
eyes,
And caught reflected summer
skies,
With all the promise therein
lies,
He felt, indeed, to love were
wise.

—*****—

AT length, the time having arrived, Aunt Martha, in compliance with immemorial usage, went to the pantry, and taking from the shelf the old familiar conch shell, blew upon it to call the men to the midday meal. As the dozen or more farm hands came home in response to the summons, they were accompanied by a young man on horseback, who, after dismounting, patted the animal affectionately for a moment and turned her over to Uncle Jerry to be cared for. He then walked leisurely towards the house, his followers, in the meantime, having gone

OZARK POST OFFICE.

to their quarters in the outhouses formerly occupied by the slaves. He was apparently twenty-two or three years of age, tall and erect, with clean cut features, dark flowing hair, and the hardy physical development of one accustomed to outdoor life. A carefully trimmed moustache shaded the upper lip, though it failed to conceal a firm and expressive mouth. As he entered the house he greeted Mrs. Parr and Mrs. Riddle in a pleasant way, when they all repaired to the dining room, the young man going directly to the sideboard, and pouring from a decanter into a glass a portion of its contents, turned towards the ladies, and said in respectful tones, "here's to your good health."

Mrs. Parr, after seating her guest, took her place at the head of the table, when Walter Parr, for such it was, and Alice and Rosa joined them. Mrs. Riddle, with that familiarity pardonable in an

OZARK POST OFFICE.

old friend, began the conversation :

“You are getting to be quite a man, Walter,” she declared, sitting straight up and peering at the young man through her glasses, with a sidelong glance that seemed laden with the weight of authority, “though not as tall as your father.”

Any reference to Major Parr was sure to arouse unpleasant memories, and Mrs. Parr exhibited signs of emotion. Walter Parr’s face suffused slightly at Mrs. Riddle’s allusion to himself, though he made no reply, and presently proceeded as was his custom since the death of his father, to ask the blessing, his mother insisting upon a strict observance of the old time forms.

Mrs. Parr’s method was strikingly apparent. Everything in the room was scrupulously clean and polished, even to the decanters and tumblers on the sideboard, to touch which, except in accordance with the rule laid down by ancestral

OZARK POST OFFICE.

usage—morning, noon and evening—would have been regarded as a serious breach of family etiquette. A colored servant stood behind Mrs. Parr's chair ready to do her bidding, for nothing was undertaken without her direction. Even Aunt Martha, who ruled with absolute sway in the kitchen, relinquished all authority when the menu was placed before her mistress.

Alice evidently had been weeping. She gave her undivided attention to Rosa, anticipating her wants in silence, and rarely lifting her eyes.

As soon as the opportunity occurred—for Mrs. Riddle was persistently communicative on matters concerning himself, Walter turned from her to his little sister, whom he addressed in a playful manner, speaking at the same time a few words to Alice, whose unhappy mood seemed to annoy him. Having met her mother in the public highway early in the day,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

going toward the house, he suspected the cause of Alice's depression and was visibly affected by it. He had taken a great liking to Alice from the first time they met, and he had now been home nearly two months. Immediately after dinner Alice returned to her seat beneath the trees, where she could keep a watch over her mother and be ready to administer to her wants as soon as she should awaken. Walter Parr joined her after a brief interval. They conversed for a few moments when he returned with the men to the fields. He was in the habit of passing a brief period now and again in Alice's company, but as his little sister Rosa was supposed by Mrs. Parr to be the attraction, she gave the matter no thought. Alice, however, with true feminine instinct, divined the real import of his solicitude and became alarmed. Indeed, she always felt nervous and uncomfortable in his presence, especially

OZARK POST OFFICE.

when they were alone, and avoided as far as possible such meetings, though her timidity served only to stimulate his ardor. Once, when a number of his employees evinced a disposition to make sport of her mother in his presence, he gave them such a reprimand that the indignity was not repeated.

‘ ‘I ’low ez how he’s kearin’ right smart fur her darter,” said one of the mountaineer rustics as soon as Waltar Parr had departed.

‘ ‘Waal, I couldn’t blame him fur that,” rejoined another, “ez Alice is a moughty purty guyrl, an’ ez sper’ited ez they make ’em.”

‘ ‘They ’low ez how Major Parr wuz a cavortin’ roun’ with Capt. Leavenworth on the day of that shooting, though he wuzn’t thar when they hed the fight,” pursued the first speaker, whose boyish appearance acquitted him of having taken an active part in the encounter.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“Edzactly,” responded the other.

“An’ that his wldder tuk Alice to raise ’cause she felt her ccnscience tetched about the way her father wuz killed.”

“So I hev hearn.”

“An’ wuzn’t it a moughty keowardly trick,” continued the inquisitive youth, tentatively.

There was a pause, when the other remarked in a conciliatory tone, “I reckon ez how ’twuzn’t jes on the squar, tho’t it couldn’t be help’t. Leastwise, thar wuzn’t no keowards thar on that day. Naw,” he concluded after another pause, “I ’low ye’ll fin’ no keowards in Missouri.”

The hours dragged and the dreamy languor of a summer afternoon pervaded the atmosphere. Mrs. Parr and Mrs. Riddle dozed, knitted and chatted alternately, in their easy chairs on the front porch. Aunt Martha went leisurely on with her routine duties, and Mrs. Gregg

OZARK POST OFFICE.

still slept. Alice alone was alert. When Walter Parr returned home in the evening she was alone in the garden, little Rosa in the meantime being with her mother.

“You seem to be afraid of me, Alice,” he said, coming upon her rather suddenly and noticing that she was disposed to avoid him, “but I will not harm you.”

Alice made no reply, but cast upon Walter a look that reminded him of the beam that once shot from the eyes of a startled fawn upon which he was about to fire, but which saved its life. He drew back bewildered and abashed. She was gathering flowers when he interrupted her, and held in her hand a tastefully arranged boquet, the carmine glow of which shone in striking contrast with the transparent pallor of her own countenance, though it detracted nothing from her beauty. The silence continued for quite a time. Could a painter have

OZARK POST OFFICE.

seized upon the picture and transferred it to canvas with all its primitive simplicity and dramatic effect, the result must have survived as a marvelous triumph of art.

From a crevice in the mountains the sun shed its parting rays, kindling a fire in the windows of a number of distant farm houses and here and there bringing into stronger relief the responsive outlines of the Osage as it trailed its way through the valley. Homeward plodded the labor-stained harvesters, and with faces set in the same direction, the grazing cattle were making steady progress.

“Do you wish to avoid me, Alice?” pleaded Walter Parr as soon as he could find courage to again address her.

Alice turned from him in fright, seized with an impulse to flee, but her courage failed her. The flowers fell upon the ground and she seemed almost beside herself with excitement. Walter, also,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

was visibly affected. He replaced the bouquet in her hand with melancholy eagerness and drew aside without speaking. Alice presently regained her composure and began arranging the roses in the deftest manner, her shapely hands well becoming so dainty an employment. Walter Parr watched her intently. A slight flush had crept to her cheeks and an air of unusual repose beamed from her countenance. She seemed to have instantly changed and was no longer the shy and shrinking maiden whom Walter Parr had been accustomed to regard as little more than a child, and now stood forth a woman revealed, capable of accepting and imposing conditions.

He was startled at the transformation, and felt himself for the first time in her presence absolutely on the defensive. The pursued had at last turned upon the pursuer, not with the terrible instinct of revenge, but with all the subtle power of

OZARK POST OFFICE.

fascinating maidenhood. Alice was still toying with the flowers as if inviting remark, when a slight disturbance came from the direction of the house. She turned quickly to catch its import, thinking perhaps it might be some one calling.

“Don’t go yet, Alice,” pleaded Walter, fearing she was about to leave him. “It’s only Aunt Martha talking to one of the men. When your mother is ready to go I’ll have Uncle Jerry hitch up and take her home.”

Alice made no reply to Walter’s entreaty, but stood for a moment gazing intently in the direction of the house and then walked hurriedly away.

XIV.

Is it meet that the trooper returning
once more
To the scenes of his youth when
the battle is o'er,
Who has borne in the fray the
proud banner on high,
Should be slain by the glance of
a fair maiden's eye?

—*****—

ACCUSTOMED as was Walter Parr to Alice's apparent indifference to his advances, he was not surprised at the abrupt manner in which she terminated the interview, though he felt greatly relieved when he saw, or imagined as much, that her conduct was not prompted by a desire to withdraw from his company, but was due to excitement resulting from the discovery that her mother had risen during her brief absence and was already in the act of taking her departure. He followed them with his eyes until they

OZARK POST OFFICE.

disappeared behind a clump of trees, and then, taking a seat in the arbor near by, gave himself up to meditation. He recollected his promise to Alice to have Uncle Jerry convey her mother to her home as soon as she should be in a condition to leave, but, concluding that it was now too late to carry out this idea, and that after accompanying her mother for a distance Alice would return, he decided to let matters take their course.

Walter Parr however, did not dismiss them from his mind. On the contrary, his thoughts kept pace with them in their meanderings through the silent woods, with a melancholy interest that nothing could divert. He pictured to himself the exact location they were at that moment traversing, and wondered if the time would ever come when he might hope to receive from Alice that affectionate regard which alone fell to the lot of her poor demented mother. At length

OZARK POST OFFICE.

he was aroused from his reveries by Aunt Martha, who came into the garden for the purpose of gathering flowers, and wishing to avoid any appearance of moodiness he addressed the faithful old servant in a voice of affected cheerfulness, when she gave a start and exclaimed:

“‘Lor’ Mars’ Waltah, how you skeer me; had no idee yo’ wuz heah.’”

“‘I was only resting a little, Aunty,’” he rejoined, assuming a half reclining posture on the seat and gazing at her through an opening in the branches, “‘and doing some planning for to-morrow.’”

Aunt Martha broke into a loud laugh and declared, “‘All de planin’ yo’ is a doin’, Mars’ Waltah, ain’t a gwine ter hev much ’fluence on de craps. No, chil’,” she pursued with that delightful familiarity with which she had been accustomed to address Walter Parr from infancy, and which was not uncommon between master and slave in ante-bellum

OZARK POST OFFICE.

days, “‘yo’ is a squandin all yo’ min’ on dat gal.”

Here Aunt Martha’s cachinations became more vociferous. She grew serious however, on noticing that Walter seemed confused by her remarks, and attempted to apologize, but he assured her she had spoken only the truth. He inquired however, with eager solicitude if his mother was also aware of his attachment.

“‘I ’lows no, Mars’ Waltah,” replied Aunt Martha, in the most earnest and confidential tones; “‘we dassnt tell the Missis, fo’ ef she know’d dat yo’ keer fo’ Alice she sen’ her ’way, an’ we doan want her to go, ’kase she’s a nice gal, sho’. Fo’ks say dat she poo’ an’ dat her mamma’s in de county house, an’ dat make her ’shamed an’ ac’ ’culiar. She’s skeered all de time fear sumbody gwine to ta’k ’bcut her mamma. Las’ week Squire Jenkins stop’t ter see Missis, an’

OZARK POST OFFICE.

mos' de fus' wu'd he say wuz dat he hear dat crazy Mrs. Gregg wuz out agin an' a roamin' 'roun de kentry. De Squire he did'nt see Alice, but she hear him, an' goes out in de ya'd an' cry like'er heart wuz brok'. Bime-by I go out to look fo' her, an' dar she wuz a settin' under de trees a takin' ter a prairie robin jes like it wuz human. She wuzn't a cryin' now but her eyes wuz moughty red like she ben a sorrerin'. She say to dat robin, she say, yo' ain't got no sick mammy in the po' house, is yo', little birdie? Yo' fo'ks dey all well an' happy. De robin he look kin' o' sid'way at Alice, ez ef he unerstan' an' den he kum up ter her jes like he wuzn't afeard. Dar wuz some mo' bu'ds on de grass an' in de trees an' dey all look like dey wuz a listenin', dey did, Mars' Waltah, fo' a fac.''

Here Aunt Martha paused for a moment, but noticing that Walter remained silent, with his eyes fixed on the ground

OZARK POST OFFICE.

as if anxious to hear more, she went on:
“I stood dar a watchin’ her fo’ a spell
an’ I say ter myseif ez I sed afo’, dat gal’s
’culiar. She allus a doin’ sumfin’ dif’nt
frum udder fo’ks. One day Missis, she
say, Aunt Martha, whar’s Alice an’ de
chil’, an’ I say, Missis, I dunno, fo’ I
han’t seed her fo’ mo’n an’ ’our, an’ she
say, go an’ sarch fo’ her, an’ tell her ter
bring de chil’ in de house fo’ its time ter
take its nap. So I go’s out in de ya’d
an’ de gad’n an’ look’n look, but she
wuz no wha’ to be foun’. Den I tuk de
paf down fro’ de woods ter de run, an’
dar, shu’ ’nuf, she wuz, a takin’ to de
watah dat kum a pour’n down from de
mount’n, jes the same ez she tak’d ter
de pra’ry robin. She say, yo’ ain’t got
no sick mammy in de po’ house, hev yo’
little brook, kase you would’nt go sing-
in’ all de time dat way frew de forres’ so
happy ef yo’ had. An’ dar she sot an’
sot, a talkin’ an’ a talkin’, an’ a citin’

OZARK POST OFFICE.

po'try 'bout de bu'ds an' de flow'rs, an' sky an' brooks to de chil'. Bime-by I say, Alice, what yo' doin', an' she riz up 'sprised like, an' say, Aunt Martha, is dat yo', an' I say Alice it's me, sho', but whar yo' git all dat book larnin'? She wuz sorter 'fused at fus' an' I ax her agin' whar she git it, an' she say she larnt it from de schoolmistis an' de books Mister Parr fotch her from St. Louis. She say," added Aunt Martha, in an exultant way, "dat she's gwine to larn me ter read, too."

Walter Parr listened attentively to her random talk, accompanying her about the garden as she gathered the flowers, though he learned from her little that he did not already know concerning Alice's peculiar disposition.

"Did she say that it was me that gave her the books?" he at length asked.

"Sho' an' she did, Mars' Waltah, an' she say yo' wuz a moughty fin' gem'man

OZARK POST OFFICE.

ter be so good ter her, fo' yo' wuz allus fotchin' her somfin' nice.''

Walter Parr was perplexed. Doubt and desire struggled within him for mastery. At length he said to Aunt Martha, "If Alice thinks that I'm such a fine gentleman, why is she always so shy of me when I'm near her? She doesn't act that way with the other young men of the neighborhood. I'm afraid," he declared forlonly, "she doesn't care for me."

"Keer fo' yo' Mars' Waltah," replied Aunt Martha, with an air of confidential assurance. "Sartenly she do; co's she mo' free wif de odder youg men dan wif yo', kase dey po' folks like'r se'f.'"

Aunt Martha having protracted her stay in the garden, now returned to the house and Walter Parr soon followed.

Directly after supper Mrs. Riddle began making preparations for going home, On parting with her guest at the gate, Mrs. Parr said, "you had better drive

OZARK POST OFFICE.

as fast as you can, for it looks like rain.” The sky was already partially overcast with threatening clouds, and when Mrs. Parr returned to the house she found Aunt Martha closing the windows and doors in anticipation of a storm. As she settled into a chair on the porch beside her son, a breeze swept over the woods beyond, inverting the leaves and investing them with a quivering light, and a moment later a field of half-grown corn caught the infection, and became an undulating sea of mingled green and gray.

Walter Parr watched the scene with a troubled expression, and paid but little attention to his mother’s remarks. Presently he arose and going into the yard called Uncle Jerry, who was busying himself with the evening chores.

“You can have one of the men saddle up Nell as soon as you can.”

Mrs. Parr caught her son’s remark, and said anxiously, “you are not going

OZARK POST OFFICE.

out in this kind of weather, are you, my son?’’

‘‘Well, I was thinking of taking a little ride, mamma,’’ he replied evasively, his face turned in the direction that the mother and daughter had taken.

‘‘And where do you intend going?’’ she insisted.

Walter passed into the house without replying, but presently returned with a pair of cavalry pistols buckled to his waist. In his eyes there was a look of courageous determination.

Surprised at her son’s strange action, Mrs. Parr repeated her question, ‘‘where do you intend going?’’

‘‘I’m going to look after Alice,’’ he rejoined, rather impetuously. ‘‘It is not safe for women to be caught out in the woods after dark.’’

Mrs. Parr rested her hands on the arms of her chair and peered into the twilight as if undecided what to say. The trees

OZARK POST OFFICE.

now swayed before the increasing wind, and the frail corn lay almost flat upon the earth. The situation was ominous. She realized the propriety of some one going to the assistance of the two, but reflected that it was not a proper mission to be undertaken by her son, and finally suggested that one of the men be directed to go for them.

“I don’t think he would find them,” he retorted, “for they have got too much of a start. No,” he insisted, “I guess it’ll take Nell and me to overtake them.”

At this juncture, the mare, a blooded animal brought home by Walter Parr at the close of the war, and which had carried him safely through a number of severe engagements, was led from the stable into the lane by Uncle Jerry.

Observing her son was still intent on carrying out his purpose, his mother made further effort to dissuade him, but

OZARK POST OFFICE.

failing in this, she determined to assert her authority.

“You must not disobey me in this matter, Walter.” She had risen to her feet, and speaking with an energy that amounted to a command, was surprised to see, for the first time, he was disposed to manifest toward her a spirit of disobedience.

It was now almost dark. He moved a step forward as if to depart. His mother was at his side in an instant, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, said, “you are not going, Walter; you are not going, at least until after the storm’s over.”

For a time both were silent. At last, Walter said, “I don’t want to disobey you, mamma, but I must go after Alice; if I don’t, I’m afraid something will happen to her.”

“And what if something should happen to her?” she inquired in a tone of mingled reproach and hauteur, “it’s no affair of yours.”

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“But I can’t help it, mamma,” he replied, gazing fixedly at the floor.

Mrs. Parr drew herself up proudly, her eyes flashed and her whole demeanor showed her to be greatly excited. The truth dawned upon her in an instant. She recoiled at first, but recovering very quickly, she cried:

“And so you are in love with this pauper, are you? The daughter of a Yankee! Oh, you are a nice Parr, you are. To think that you should bring the family to this! You can go after her if you wish,” she went on, motioning him from the house, “but don’t bring her back here.”

Walter Parr made no answer, but immediately withdrew. She called to him a moment later, for the purpose of modifying her language, but he had already taken his departure.

XV.

Mounting his steed like a
warrior bold,
Into the night and alone
rode he,
Through a land whose story
has been told
On the crimson page of
history.

—**~**~**~**~**~—

FOR a time the darkness proved no barrier to Walter Parr's progress, but at length the lightning became so blinding that he was obliged to proceed with the greatest caution. As he contemplated the scene, rendered all the more impressive by the loud and incessant thunder, it seemed to him as if the late contending armies might have again returned to the conflict, and were hurling destruction at each other from the summits of the mountains.

At last the rain descended. It rattled for a moment on the tree tops and then

OZARK POST OFFICE.

sifting through the foliage, was caught by the wind and hurled with startling effect against all opposing objects. Walter Parr, though amply protected by a rubber coat, concluded to pause for a time, and drawing the mare from the road dismounted. As he stood with his arms resting on the saddle, waiting for the crisis to pass, his mind was busy with thoughts of Alice and her mother. He knew they could not yet have reached their destination, and wondered if they would seek shelter at some one of the farm-houses they would be obliged to pass, if following the main road, or if the mother, having become uncontrollable, had insisted upon some other course of action, in which event he might be unable to find them. Besides, he was fully aware that the rain would result in impeding his own progress. A small stream near by was already flooded, and scarcely a rod from his feet a torrent poured into

OZARK POST OFFICE.

a sink-hole with an ominous roar which suggested the propriety of caution. Finally the sky began to clear and he resumed his journey. His course lay along the Osage river, which in many places became so narrow that the branches of the trees that lined its sides joined and formed above it a sort of rustic arbor, invisible at first, but brought into strong relief a little later by the moonlight. The surface of the stream was already encumbered with driftwood, and the noise of gullies pouring in from the adjacent country produced a startling effect. Now and again a fish would leap into the air with a graceful curve and as quickly disappear, and on one occasion a muskrat was seen putting forth strenuous efforts to reach the opposite bank.

Every vestige of the storm had now vanished, though the woods were still damp and gloomy, and an odor peculiar to freshets, pervaded the atmosphere.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Meantime, Walter Parr hastened on, pausing at intervals to listen, hoping to catch the sound of Alice's voice, or at least to gain some clew that would lead to the discovery of herself and mother. He had already passed several residences, but as they were all dark, and evidently well guarded by vicious dogs, whose incessant barking served as a warning to all such unfortunate creatures, he concluded it would be useless to attempt to make any inquiry concerning them. It was now less than two miles to the county house. He looked at his watch and saw that it was nearly ten o'clock. A low, mournful sound at this moment reached his ears. He paused and listened. It proved to be the hooting of an owl on a distant peak, and he started on again as if the dismal wail might have spurred him to renewed effort. The road at this point left the river, and led through a heavily timbered country so isolated

OZARK POST OFFICE.

and lonely that he instinctively placed his hand on his pistols to assure himself that he was armed. The next instant the mare shied and snorted, and seemed to be greatly alarmed. Observing something move he dismounted when he discovered Alice near the base of a large oak, bending over the prostrate form of her mother, weeping. He spoke to her. She startled, and was just in the act of falling, but he caught her in his arms and placed her gently beside the tree. He then hastened to examine her mother and found she was dead. Turning to Alice, who had partially recovered from her fright, he said: ‘‘It’s a good thing I came after you, Alice, for if I hadn’t I don’t know what might have happened to you.’’

Alice’s only answer was an increase of sobs. At this juncture a peculiar sound came from the side of the mountain less than half a mile distant, which Walter

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Parr's experienced ear detected to have emanated from a panther. The owl, too, renewed its distressing cry. He paused a moment to listen, and then removing his rubber coat he placed it upon the ground and laid the body of Mrs. Gregg upon it to protect it from the damp. He next unsaddled the mare and hitching her to a tree close at hand, set about doing what he could for Alice's comfort. He placed the small saddle blanket over a half decayed log which he discovered a few feet distant, and in this way somewhat improved her seat, but farther than this the means of relief were not at hand. Alice for a time was inconsolable, but at length, having found solace in tears, and from sheer exhaustion, she became calmer, and seated side by side the two conversed and patiently awaited the dawn. The solemnity of the occasion served to restrain their conversation, and although Walter Parr was more than once, during

OZARK POST OFFICE.

their lonely tryst, moved to declare afresh his love for her, which was all the more intense on account of her present forlorn condition, his high sense of honor asserted itself, and prevented him from doing so. Naturally enough, Alice's thoughts were wholly absorbed in her dead mother. Her talk was desultory and often interrupted by paroxysms of grief. She evidently had no thought of herself, past, present or future, and when Walter Parr took occasion, for the purpose of allaying her grief, to suggest that her mother would be decently buried, and that she, herself, would be taken care of, she made no reply. Confronted by an overshadowing present, all future matters were evidently of secondary moment. Several times during the night the cry of wild beasts rang through the woods with startling effect, but none of them attempted to disturb the watchers.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

At length came the longed for dawn, and soon the birds began to bestir themselves in the trees that stretched away into an unbroken forest in all directions. Life indestructible and eternal had reasserted itself. The earth was full of joyous song. The dead alone were silent. Walter Parr and Alice had already risen from their seats and were moving about, daylight having suggested the necessity of action. As the road lay but a short distance away, Walter Parr was in hopes that some one would soon happen along when their helpless condition could be made known to the outside world. The mare, to be sure, was still at hand, but he dared not for a moment leave Alice and her dead mother to go for assistance. And so they waited.

Presently the sun rose above the mountains and the moisture that still clung to the forest, as the result of the rain of the previous night began to take wings and

OZARK POST OFFICE.

float away in great white clouds, leaving in their path the fresh verdant glory of a summer morning. Scarcely a hundred yards away flowed the Osage, muddy and swollen, though greatly reduced in volume from what it was a few hours before, the banks presenting ample proof of the flood which had so recently swept the narrow valley. On either side of them the mountains rose so abruptly as to be almost impassable, but the view was enchanting. Moss grew abundantly about the roots of the trees and over the vast ledges of rocks, many of which were also half hidden by luxuriant growths of creeping vines, while wild flowers were everywhere to be seen.

Walter Parr gathered a large bunch of these and dividing it gave a part to Alice and placed the residue on her dead mother's breast. Since death all evidences of pain and sorrow had disappeared and she lay like one enjoying a peaceful sleep.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Alice noticed the change and remarked through her tears, ‘ ‘She’s better off; it’s the first moment’s rest she has had since we came to Ozark Post Office.’ ’

At this juncture a noise was heard in the distance and presently a two-horse team came in view, when Walter Parr recognized the driver to be a revenue officer accompanied by Zeb Posey, who was again under arrest for moonshining. When the team came to where Walter Parr and Alice were standing, it was brought to a stop, and the officer was informed of Mrs. Gregg’s death, and requested to convey her body back to the Parr homestead for burial. A few moments later the remains of Mrs. Gregg were placed in the wagon by the side of Posey’s captured still, Alice was helped to a seat, Walter Parr saddled and bestrode the mare, when the solemn procession went on its way. As the road was heavy from the rain of the previous

OZARK POST OFFICE.

night, nearly two hours were consumed in the journey. The day was a perfect one, and nothing could be added to the sublimity of the scene, to contemplate which was to be brought into the very presence of the Creator, and realize the justification of His every act. Alice at last was reconciled. Very little conversation took place during the journey. It was the middle of the forenoon when they reached the Parr homestead. As they drove up, Uncle Jerry who had been on the look out for his young master's return, promptly met them at the gate.

Mrs. Parr having been informed of her son's presence, came out, her features still showing the effects of a restless night. Walter Parr dismounted, and as Uncle Jerry took charge of the mare he instructed him to call two of the hired men at once. As a number of hands were at work near by, they responded quickly, and the remains of Mrs. Gregg were taken

OZARK POST OFFICE.

into the house. In the meantime, Alice had alighted and Mrs. Parr had been informed of the mother's death. Her feminine nature yielded to the pitiable spectacle and she fell into a chair and wept.

XVI.

They laid her where the grasses grow,
While yet the rose was red,
And some had stone above their graves,
On which the years had fed.
And others that were newer made
Where rose the fresh tossed clay,
Reminding them how their's would look,
And then they drove away.

—*****—

MRS. GREGG'S funeral was an event long to be remembered by the people of Ozark Post Office. It was conducted on a scale, and represented an outlay out of all proportion to her standing in the community. Walter Parr selected, from the village undertaker's stock, one of his finest caskets, and instructed him to spare no expense necessary to give Mrs. Gregg decent burial. She had died on the night preceding the publication day of the Clarion, and Webber took occasion to make her death the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

subject of a pathetic story, which was all the more interesting because it was true. The subject appealed to him very forcibly, and he entered upon his task with that enthusiasm which invariably characterized his efforts when defending the defenseless, or attempting to right a wrong. He pictured the exemplary conduct of John Gregg from the time he arrived in the village a stranger, the laudable personal sacrifices he had made in order that he might succeed in building up a lucrative law practice, which would sooner or later justify him in sending for his wife and child; his final triumph, and lastly his heroic death. Webber declared him to be the first victim of the war in Southwest Missouri, and a martyr to the cause of free government. Then he portrayed his wife's agony on learning her husband's fate, her mental overthrow, and pathetic death in the woods. He spoke of the daughter's devotion, and of

OZARK POST OFFICE.

her sterling character, developed under the most trying circumstances, closing by paying a deserved tribute to Walter Parr, who, in disregard of his own personal safety, had gone to her rescue during the storm. "Here," he went on, "is a bit of romance in real life. The scion of an old Southern family, and an ex-confederate officer as well, championing the daughter of a despised Yankee. Light seems to be breaking."

This was a favorite remark of Webber's. The reforms which he had labored for were slow to materialize, but he never wholly despaired, and he was ever on the alert for some straw of hope to which he might cling. The people had stood apart and strove to maintain a distinct individuality. Go down to Cairo, and you will see two mighty rivers, the Mississippi and Ohio, come together. There is no sound of battle, yet the signs of a great conflict are nevertheless apparent. For

OZARK POST OFFICE.

a season a line as distinct as though it were traced by some underlying structure, divides them; but follow it and it will gradually disappear. At last a common destiny has made them one.

Whether moved by Webber's article, curiosity, or a desire to show their sympathy for an unfortunate woman, would be no easy matter to decide. Perhaps all these influences were at work; albeit, the funeral was the largest ever seen at Ozark Post Office. The people came in from the country by the hundreds, and the place presented the appearance of a holiday. The small church held but a handful of those who sought admittance. Soldiers, maimed and otherwise, who had fought on opposite sides, were in attendance. Captain Leavenworth brought his entire family. Captain Braithwait and Deacon Riddle were among the pall bearers. Parson Watts, who a year before had performed the same service for

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Major Parr, preached the sermon, which was very appropriate, and Squire Jenkins led the singing. Whatever might be the Squire's attitude towards the world outside, the church was his spiritual home, and once within its sacred precincts, he was all humility and obedience.

He had known Mrs. Gregg as an inmate of the poor house, of which he, like Deacon Riddle, was a director, but had never manifested, like the other, any special interest in her welfare. True, he was the heaviest tax-payer in the county, and from this point of view one of the institutions principal supporters, but all this was merely business, and was treated from a commercial stand point. He was not indifferent, nor did he shrink from the duties of citizenship. On the contrary, he met all of these obligations promptly, but he was not enthusiastic or emotional. He was neither elated by success nor cast down by adversity, but

OZARK POST OFFICE.

took a practical view of life and accepted what came without complaint or comment. From all this it will be seen that Squire Jenkins was not what the world regards as a lovable nature. He was respected and looked up to, and trusted implicitly, but rarely spoken of in terms of praise. At the church he was an attentive listener, and when the throng began to move he did what he could to have everything go off with order and system. At the cemetery he was the last to leave, remaining to see that the sexton did his whole duty. There were floral crosses and other tokens of sympathy placed on the new made grave, and Capt. Braithwait laid a wreath upon the unmarked grave of John Gregg, which joined it, for Deacon Riddle was thoughtful enough to have them buried side by side. When at length the throng dispersed, an air of quiet repose took possession of the village that was oppressive. All were af-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

fectured by it. It was the first time since the breaking out of the war that the community at large had been brought to a full contemplation of the situation.

Webber remarked to Deacon Riddle at the post office, later in the day, "Deacon, we are in the midst of one of those overshadowing events of which I spoke during one of our earliest meetings. If anything of importance should happen at Ozark Post Office at this date, it will be remembered as having taken place on the day that Mrs. Gregg was buried. Justice is sometimes tardy, but it is sure. The normal condition of the universe is harmony. This is occasionally interrupted by the recurrence of earthquakes and storms, but they soon pass. We have had these things here and know the havoc they create. Let us trust that we are now to enjoy the calm."

The Deacon stood for a moment as if attempting to swallow something, and

OZARK POST OFFICE.

then remarked: “Everything will come out all right in the end. Men’s passions sometimes run away with their reason, but they never carry it so far that it does not come back.”

XVII.

Maid of the solemn harp, sing
a new song,
Breathe not a word of your
sorrow and wrong.
Turn to the promise of youth
and be free,
All that life offers is waiting
for thee.

—**~**~**~**~**~—

FROM their first meeting, Miss Parks and Alice were almost constant companions, and they soon grew to be very much attached to each other. Their youthful experiences were not dissimilar. Both were orphans, and alike had been thrown upon their own resources very early in life. Miss Park's parents died when she was a mere child, and she had been brought up by an aunt, who gave her a thorough education. Her musical studies were completed in Europe. Before coming West she sang in a choir in

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Boston, and directly after reaching Ozark Post Office she was induced by Parson Watts to undertake the performance of similar duties for his church, so that she soon became a prominent figure in the community, and her society was much sought after by both sexes of the better class.

Shortly after Walter Parr's return, Alice was relieved of all responsibility as to Rosa by a colored servant, and became the child's associate under the tuition of Miss Parks. Mrs. Parr had been influenced to make this concession in favor of Alice in order that she might have an opportunity to prepare herself to make her own way in the world, should the necessity arise. From this time on her life began to pass more pleasantly, and when not at her studies she would join the other members of the family in a pleasant drive about the country, or enter with them into their social pleasures

OZARK POST OFFICE.

generally. Sometimes Walter Parr would take them on a fishing excursion to the Osage, or to a pic nic, where they would spend the day. Then there was the annual camp-meeting, where Parson Watts preached his exhaustive and sleep inducing sermons in "God's temple," as he called the woods, and where Squire Jenkins was afforded an opportunity to exhibit his power as an exhorter, and which gained for him among the irreverent, the sobriquet, "Ozark whistler." He had a fashion, when warmed up to his work, of drawing his breath through his nostrils, that produced a sniffing sound that is never heard outside of a Methodist sanctuary, and which at that period was recognized by all the sect as official. Deacon Riddle never employed it. His sense of humor, which enabled him to laugh at his own shortcomings, came to his rescue and saved him from all such innovations. Neither was he what might

OZARK POST OFFICE.

be called a ranter. The true philosopher never is.

Sometimes on their drives they would pay a quiet visit to the hamlet where the dead rested, and lay flowers upon their graves. A pleasant surprise awaited Alice on one of these occasions. They had paid homage to the grave of Major Parr and were approaching the vicinity where Mr. and Mrs. Gregg were buried, when they were confronted by two recently erected headstones, on which appeared the names, the date of birth and death of these two unfortunates. Alice sobbed aloud when she caught sight of the plain, neat memorials, and for a time was too full for utterance. When she regained her composure she expressed her gratitude in a modest way, but made no reference as to whom she regarded herself as indebted for this evidence of kindly regard. Naturally she supposed it could be no other than Mrs. Parr, and

OZARK POST OFFICE.

after returning home she thanked her for her noble deed. Mrs. Parr declared she knew nothing of the circumstance. "It must have been Walter," she said, looking at her son, who was seated near by.

He blushed, and in a confused manner admitted that he had ordered the stones erected. Alice hesitated before replying, fearing that her son's action might be displeasing to Mrs. Parr, yet she felt it to be her duty to express her thanks to him, which she did, and then inquired: "But where did you get the birth dates, Mr. Parr?"

She always called him Mr. Parr, and maintained towards him an attitude of reserve which precluded any attempt at familiarity. He had often tried to break down this barrier, but without success.

"From your family Bible on the table there," he answered, gravely.

"Oh, yes," she rejoined, recalling the fact that the book had been forwarded

OZARK POST OFFICE.

among her mother's effects and brought to her by Deacon Riddle, "and it was very thoughtful of you."

Supper being announced, the subject was dropped, and the conversation assumed a more cheerful tone. From grave to gay is a natural transition of the mind. The tension finds relaxation in the lighter moods. After supper Miss Parks and Alice played and sang, Walter Parr turning the music, and now and then joining them in a tune. The airs selected must have been suggested by the afternoon's outing, for none of them were of a frivolous nature. The childish voice of Rosa, blending with the others, was not without its charm, and altogether the atmosphere was that of a happy and contented home, which had been tempered by sorrow and drawn more closely together by suffering. Above all, there was order and dignity that is a growth and cannot be assumed. Walter Parr was a born

OZARK POST OFFICE.

gentleman. Having began his education at an early age, he had completed his college course before entering the army, and his four years of service as a staff officer had detracted nothing from his refinement of manner and courteous bearing. Mrs. Parr was accustomed to remark, when some one would speak of her son in complimentary terms: “It’s impossible for him to be anything but a gentleman, he is the son of his father.”

When Deacon Riddle learned that Walter Parr had erected the stones over the graves of Mr. and Mrs. Gregg, he was much affected, and remarked to his wife, “there’s a woman behind all this. These same fragile creatures that did so much to engender the feeling of sectional hatred, and bring on the conflict, will, in turn, save the country. Love knows no nationality or politics. I have noticed for some time that Walter Parr is smitten with the charms of Alice Gregg.”

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“‘But Mrs. Parr will never consent to such a match; she’s too proud,’” returned his wife.

“‘Proud,’” re-echoed the Deacon, with a chuckle, “‘the word is obsolete in the South. The ‘p’ and ‘r’ are all that remain of it. Practical is the term now. Name from this time on will stand simply for what it represents in intrinsic merit. This may be vested in wealth, in position, in youth and beauty, or in talent, but it must voice to-day—not yesterday. From this point of view Alice is a living, vital power.”

Soon after this talk, Webber called for his daily batch of mail, which consisted of a number of country exchanges, when the Deacon remarked: “‘Webber, I’ve an item for you.’”

Instinctively the editor’s fingers sought his vest pocket and out came his pencil.

“‘What is it?’” he eagerly inquired.

“‘Go over to the cemetery, and you

OZARK POST OFFICE.

will see some improvements made about the graves of John Gregg and his wife. Write them up. Walter Parr is responsible for it all.''

Without waiting for his papers, Webber went on his mission. In half an hour he returned, bearing in his hand several sheets of notes. He was in high feather, and remarked as he gathered up his mail, 'Deacon, the sequel to the death of Mrs. Gregg will make good reading.' Then he added with a flourish, 'The Archimedeian lever is getting in its work.'

The next issue of the Clarion contained an article in Webber's happiest vein. Friendship for Walter Parr, who had recently become one of his largest advertising patrons, no doubt influenced him somewhat in writing the article, but he would not admit this, even to himself. He was not averse to reaping whatever financial returns might accrue from his literary efforts, but his chiefest reward,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

he felt, came in the form of the approval of his readers. He took equal delight in airing an injustice and a good deed, because in doing so, he was setting things right. And "setting things right" was his mission as a journalist.

XVIII.

Where woods are dense and shadows
stray,
And the winding river takes
its way,
They sit once more in the
old canoe,
The happier that it bears
but two.

—*****—

IT was in the cool of the evening, and Walter Parr and Alice were taking their accustomed recreation on the Osage river. Alice was seated in the bow of the canoe and Walter occupied the stern and wielded the oar. A number of other young people were similarly enjoying themselves, but none of them were just then near enough to catch what might be said in a conversational tone. The river at this point being narrow and the banks steep, the branches of the trees nearly joined overhead, forming sort of an

OZARK POST OFFICE.

alcove through which the rays of the sun seldom penetrated. The location had long been a favorite boating and fishing resort for the people of the surrounding country. They were passing the time in the usual way, both apparently in the best of spirits, when at length Walter grew serious and remarked, "It's a year ago to-day since your mother was laid to rest, Alice. Have we not waited very patiently?" He paused long enough to give her an opportunity to say something, but she remained silent, gazing vaguely in an opposite direction. Presently she rejoined, in her usual complacent way, "Your mother hasn't yet given her consent."

"But she will," he returned, "rather than have me disobey her."

"And why should you disobey her?" she answered, with a calmness that irritated him far more than his mother's opposition to their marriage.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“I might be obliged to do so,” he said.

“And for what reason?” she insisted, with a look that seemed to penetrate to his inmost thoughts.

He hesitated for a time, as if lacking the courage to utter the words that were already upon his lips, but realizing that he had gone too far to retract, he stammered: “for you, Alice, for you; I would sacrifice everything for you.”

Alice drew back as if startled, in spite of her efforts to conceal her emotion. Walter Parr watched her closely. Presently she said: “Am I to understand that you would marry me against your mother’s wishes, and without her approval?”

She spoke in measured tones and without any sign of equivocation. Her words seemed to daze him and he did not answer immediately. Finally he replied, “If you love me as I do you, Alice, you would.”

OZARK POST OFFICE.

She dropped her right hand into the water, the slight motion of the canoe causing a faint rippling sound, which served to distract her thoughts for the time. Recalling herself she wiped her fingers with her handkerchief in silence. At length, burying her face in her hands and fixing her eyes on the bottom of the canoe, she faltered, "Have I not suffered sufficiently? Heretofore, my sorrows were the outgrowth of the acts of others, for which I could not be held accountable, but now you would have me commit an indiscretion myself that might be construed by thoughtless persons as evidence that I deserve my wretched fate."

"But you cannot be wretched with me, Alice," he pleaded. "I love you, and will protect you."

"Marriage," she insisted, "is a sacred contract, and cannot prove otherwise in the end than a disappointment, except under honorable conditions, and

OZARK POST OFFICE.

these include the parental consent and blessing.”

“But mamma will yield to our wishes rather than see us both miserable,” he urged.

“Then we must wait until she does,” she replied, firmly.

Some of the boats having by this time drawn near, the subject was dropped, the conversation took a merrier turn, and became general. A few of the younger set showed a disposition to be frolicsome and indulged for a brief period in various antics calculated to attract attention.

The sun had already gone down, and the shadows began to deepen upon the water. Some of the pleasure seekers had moored their boats and returned to their homes. Others were still gliding about. From one of these came the strains of a guitar accompanied by a sweet feminine voice, which gave utterance to a chant, as follows:

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Simple folks are all they are,
Living in the forest where
Nature's face is ever fair.

Where the river takes its way,
And the fleeting shadows play
Hide and seek throughout the day.

On its shores the cottonwood,
Dreaming in its mossy hood,
Casts its shadow on the flood.

And the rustic lovers glide
In the twilight, side by side,
Happy that the world's so wide.

And the birds are singing there
Notes that can't be heard elsewhere,
Voicing nature unaware.

Keep your city—if you will;
It's a pretty thing—but still
They would hear the whippoorwill.

Warbling near the everglade
Where no teacher yet has strayed
'Cept the one that music made.

They unknown to fame shall live
Little to the world may give—
Pass like water through the seive.

Yet they would not, though they could
Leave their mountain home and wood—
God is here and He is good.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

When the music had ceased Alice remarked that it was time for them to be going, and a few moments later Walter Parr brought the boat to the shore and they alighted.

It was nearly dusk when they reached home. Mrs. Parr was occupying her accustomed chair on the porch. Her little daughter Rosa, now half grown, and Miss Parks were seated at her side. Uncle Jerry and Aunt Martha were bestirring themselves closing up the duties of the day. Around the quarters of the hired men the scene was more animated. A number of children were at play, and there was instrumental music, singing and other evidences of merry making, including dancing, the airs being an admixture of the patriotic and sentimental. Dixie, Marching Through Georgia and Yankee Doodle apparently being most in favor. All of this was in striking contrast with the scene that was to be met

OZARK POST OFFICE.

with half a score of years before, but public sentiment had undergone a change, and all were becoming accustomed to it. The late bitter sectional hatred had been mellowed by the course of events. Chivalry is its own historian. Its deeds are written indelibly in the human heart, and the tongue that had been wont to heap venom upon the head of the invader of the soil grew less vindictive, as the people became better acquainted. Marshal deeds and feminine loveliness have ever been attracted to each other. Cupid is never a partisan. Neither is he a respecter of persons. He delights in opposites, and above all is paradoxical, so that the arm that is lifted to strike, often remains to defend. Besides women are tender and live to be won.

The evening was spent on the porch as was the family custom during the summer months. At length Rosa and Miss Parks retired, leaving Mrs. Parr, Walter

OZARK POST OFFICE.

and Alice alone. Mrs. Parr, whose persistent sternness had undergone a very perceptible change of late, was in a very gracious frame of mind. She had, no doubt, come to realize at last, though she never would admit it, that the war was over, and the cause for which her husband had died was lost. The battles henceforth were to be fought at the ballot box and in the legislative hall. Politics had already made strange bedfellows. A number of ex-Confederate officers had taken office under a Republican administration, and the sword was being rapidly transferred into the ploughsheare. The night was clear and the moon shone with great brilliancy, investing the scene with that all-pervading atmosphere which comes as a solace to the denizens of the more remote regions and seems to bring them face to face with the Creator. The shadows lay thick about the valley, obscuring the cultivated fields

OZARK POST OFFICE.

until nothing was visible but the sombre forest, through which the experienced eye might trace the course of the river picking its way through the mountains.

Walter Parr and Alice were seated on the steps at Mrs. Parr's feet. The conversation was mostly about the affairs of the farm and the work laid out for the next day. Alice, as was her custom, was all obedience and attention, though Walter Parr, ostensibly, was not an interested listener to his mother's observations. He appeared irritated and restless. Noticing his apparent discomfort she questioned him as to the cause, but he answered evasively. Imagining that perhaps her presence might prove embarrassing to the situation and prevent Walter Parr from expressing himself as freely as he otherwise might, Alice withdrew to the parlor, and opening the piano began practicing her music. Seeing they were alone, Mrs. Parr pressed her question.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“Tell me now what ails you, Walter, for I see you are not yourself.”

“You know what ails me, mamma, it’s the same old trouble. Alice continues to treat me with indifference.”

“In what way?” asked his mother anxiously.

“I have asked her to set the day of our wedding and she has refused.”

“And she’ll not marry you?” she questioned, watching her son narrowly.

“Not without your consent,” he rejoined.

“Then I think all the more of her,” said Mrs. Parr, with evident emotion.

“She’s a good girl, and if her mother hadn’t been a pauper you should marry her, but as she was, Walter, think of what people would say.”

Alice, who had been running her fingers over the scale, now struck up “Home, Sweet Home,” and the two for a moment were silent.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

At last, when the air was finished, Walter Parr placed his face in his hands and said, complainingly, ‘‘Mamma, no place would be home to me without her. Can’t you give your consent?’’

Mrs. Parr was visibly affected. With true motherly instinct the good of her son was uppermost in her heart, but her pride kept her from yielding. True, everything indicated that Alice had come of a good family. Her graceful figure, and unusual beauty, together with her native grace and refinement of manner, and above all the fact that her speech had not been contaminated by the idiom of the settlement, though she had lived in it almost from childhood. True, this might all be due to her love of books and her aptitude as a scholar, and that her tutors were from the city, but had not the other children enjoyed like advantages?

Mrs. Parr was greatly perplexed.— She had often been so before, for that

OZARK POST OFFICE.

matter. She loved the girl very dearly and yet she could not see her way clear under all the circumstances to take her to her heart as a daughter. Strong as was her own personality and character, she recognized Alice in this respect, to be her equal, and in her modest way, which never for a moment permitted her to be self-assertive, she was every bit as proud. Yet, it was the pride that comes of conscious rectitude of purpose.

For a time Mrs. Parr and her son were each principally absorbed by their own thoughts and talked but little. At length Mrs. Parr called Alice to her and motioned her to a chair. A certain formality about the proceeding convinced Alice that matters of unusual moment were about to be discussed.

At length Mrs. Parr broke the silence. "Alice, I know what Walter thinks of you, and have for some time, but I don't blame you for it, for you have acted the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

lady; but do you care for him as much as he does for you?" The effort caused her some emotion, which she could not conceal.

Alice flushed, and after waiting for a moment said, "Our social relations are so different that I have never given the matter serious thought."

"Then you are not in love with Walter?" pursued Mrs. Parr, apparently relaxing somewhat, and breathing more freely.

"I admire him greatly," rejoined Alice, feelingly, "and am very grateful for his many acts of kindness."

"Grateful for acts of kindness," said Walter Parr inwardly, as a shudder ran through his frame. "Oh, if she'd only never say that again."

The very sentiment was wormwood to him, and rose like an impassable barrier between himself and his hope of happiness. He even hated himself to think

OZARK POST OFFICE.

that he was, in point of wealth and social standing above her, and often wished he might exchange positions with the humblest rustic of the neighborhood, if the act would only place him in a more favorable light in her eyes. And yet, she was never unkind to him, and in the main, she generally seemed pleased whenever he came into her presence, though he imagined that her conduct lacked the spontaneity that should be the natural outgrowth of unrestrained love. At last the hour for Mrs. Parr to retire having arrived, she withdrew, leaving Walter and Alice alone.

XIX.

They saw the rounded moon come down
And gild the mountain's crest,
Like some fair jewel in a crown,
Eclipsing all the rest.
And when the denser shadows fell,
On valley, hill and plain,
They heard the whisperings that swell
When night and silence reign.

—*****—

A PART from their own voices, the only sound that greeted the ears of Walter and Alice was the familiar notes of the locust, and the faint bark of a dog more than a mile away. These monotonous vibrations seemed only to emphasize the silence. Above them stretched the ‘‘milky way,’’ and all the glories of the heavens. The same scene that had caught the eyes of lovers, and filled their souls with mysterious longings since the dawn of creation, and shall continue to

OZARK POST OFFICE.

enchant them till the race has run its course, was there. Alone, as they were, they seemed to have the universe to themselves. And yet each maintained a distinct individuality, and there was lacking, at least on the part of Alice, that unrestrained sympathy that should characterize two thoroughly devoted lovers. In affairs of the heart man has usually less at stake than woman. On entering the marital relation she sacrifices more than her name—the possibility of an independent career, which, however it may be discouraged by some, is dear to the heart of every human being of average ambition. The bans having been pronounced, she is, generally speaking, thenceforward, in the eyes of the world, simply what her husband makes of her. To be sure, she may supply him with the very qualities he lacks, in order to obtain success, and prove as well, his inspiration; yet, whatever of recognition

OZARK POST OFFICE.

comes to her is apt to be measured by his career. She may be the power behind the throne, but another reigns. And yet, when these conditions exist in perfect harmony, marriage is a success, and happiness, as far as it is to be realized in this world, is the result.

Both Walter and Alice understood all this, and he was anxious to enter upon the performance of his part of the contract without mental reservation. But not so with Alice. There were obstacles in the way of their union, and until these were removed she could not yield her consent. In her own heart, though she would not admit it, she was in full sympathy with her lover, but her sense of honor sealed her lips, and obliged her to suffer in silence. This is a trait common to the higher type of womanhood. The true and noble wife, who has the good of her husband at heart, appeals to him—more or less—as a negative force. She

OZARK POST OFFICE.

realizes that her strength lies in conservatism, and it behooves her to be in a measure on the defensive. Moreover, she is often obliged to criticise and bear, for a time, the sting of unmerited reproof, and for no other reason than that she performs her simple duty. Such women are the makers of men. As wife and mother their influence, though rarely apparent on the surface, is supreme. Young and inexperienced as Alice was, she already gave evidence of her right to claim kinship with those of this heroic mould. She was not under the impulse of the moment, to be won and borne off by a Lochinvar, yet the prize suffered nothing from the comparison. There was a charm in her constant resistance, and evasive firmness, never to be met with in her more frivolous sisters, whose familiarity is often apt to lead to contempt.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

They were not in the habit of sitting up so late, but the beauty of the scene so charmed them that they were loth to withdraw from it. As the night waned the great clock within told the hour. Simultaneously with the stroke of twelve, a fowl perched on a tree close by, roused itself, and flapping its wings crowed lustily. The challenge was answered by others of its tribe at various distances, until at last silence resumed sway. As the small hours approached, the locusts became less energetic in their chirpings, as if wearied by their protracted efforts, they had, with the exception of a few sentinels, joined the rest of the pulsating world to enjoy a few hours slumber. The dog too, at last was silent. Now and then a meteor would shoot across the sky with brilliant effect, filling their souls afresh with admiration for the glories that studded the unfathomable dome above. The scene was too impressive to

OZARK POST OFFICE.

admit of uninterrupted conversation. There were moments given to reflection, when the thoughts of each were turned inward in an effort to discover, if possible, something of the relationship that exists between the individual and the the Creator. They did not pursue the subject over deeply, however, for with the young sentiment is more of a directing force than reason. Walter was too much interested in Alice to be drawn, except momentarily, to the contemplation of anything else, but she, on the other hand, was less trammelled. She realized, obscure as she was, that as far as she was concerned, the universe existed for her alone. She was the centre around which the spheres revolve.

From the unfathomable source of all life, which we symbolize as God, she came, and to Him alone she was personally responsible. Whence these inspiring thoughts? Who may answer?

OZARK POST OFFICE.

And yet not a few of us, at times, have experienced them. They are the invisible essence of the visible world. They come unsought to the child in the school room, filling it with mysterious longing for something better and nobler than it has yet known. Seek out the author, the painter, the sculptor, the inventor, in their lonely garrets, inspiring them to renewed effort, and the necessity of greater sacrifices. Genius, which finds expression in art, using the term in its broader sense, is all that survives. The history of the world is simply the story of the lives of great men and women. Wealth is but a temporal condition, that may come and go as the idle wind. It leaves no lasting impression upon which the memory loves to dwell, but a great thought or a noble action is destined to live and become the admiration of the ages.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

At last, they rose to go in. The dew had already settled upon the rose bushes that grew by the side of the porch, and plucking a flower, Walter gently passed it to Alice as a parting gift. She received it ruefully, and said, "Better have permitted it to remain unplucked. It has the right to fulfill its simple destiny on the parent stem unmolested." She inhaled for a moment the sweet aroma in silence, and then went on, "Man alone denies it this. Good night, and may your slumbers not be disturbed by the dear little thing's ghost."

XX.

Oh, the lover was bold, and the
maiden was coy,
Was his wooing rejected, or did
it avail?
Were they wed? was their happiness
free from alloy?
He may learn who will read to the
end of the tale.

—*****—

AFTER a month of anxiety and suspense, Mrs. Parr at last received a letter from Major Chadwick. It was dated Washington, D. C., and conveyed the intelligence that he had been detained at the Capital on business connected with the Government, but would soon leave for New York, and give his attention to the matter entrusted to his care. She hurriedly glanced over the missive, then placing it among her private papers turned the key. She was alone at the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

time, the other members of the family being engaged in their daily duties. The terrible ordeal was telling on her and she felt that a crisis could not be averted much longer. True, her son was not openly disobedient, but his mind seemed to be in a morbid state, and he took but little interest in anything except Alice, and the fear that she might not reciprocate his affection added to his discomfort. He was sure that she was grateful for his many acts of kindness and self-sacrifice in her behalf, "and yet," he would murmur inwardly, while struggling beneath the painful sensations that weighed upon his heart, "gratitude is not love."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Parr was anxiously awaiting to hear more from Major Chadwick, hoping that his investigation might set things in a better light. As affairs stood, Alice was known only as the daughter of a late inmate of the poor-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

house. Perhaps, if the truth were known, she might be more. For her son's sake, as well as for Alice's sake, she hoped this were true. Not that this could in any way add to her intrinsic worth, but it would place her before the world in her true light, and put an end to unsavory gossip. All knew well enough that in her darkest hours Alice was never, for a moment, ashamed of her mother or her family. The cruel, fratricidal war was responsible for the misery that had come to them, and it was no fault of their own. This view was taken by the better class of people, among whom was Mrs. Parr, who finally decided to have the mystery cleared up. So she waited her time. One morning, about a month after receiving the letter from Maj. Chadwick, he called on her in person. The delight which she manifested on seeing him assured him of his welcome, and for a period he really forgot his mission, and gave himself up

OZARK POST OFFICE.

to the discussion of "old times," as he referred to the past, though he had been absent only two months.

"And what news do you bring, Major," at length, inquired Mrs. Parr, anxiously.

"Oh, everything passed off well," he rejoined. "We were mustered out of the service and I am again practicing law in Boston. It's a charming city, though I prefer the Ozark climate."

"Are we to be remembered only by the favorable conditions of our atmosphere, Major?" she replied, chidingly. Then, assuming the sad look that always moved him, she added, "We are creatures of impressions. These," as editor Webber puts it, "are the overshadowing events that go to make up our lives. We care little for detail. Oh, its sad to think that after a sojourn of nearly four years in our beautiful country, that 'thin air'

OZARK POST OFFICE.

is the one thing that is uppermost in your mind."

The Major was perplexed, but recovering, he stammered out, "Oh, I didn't say that, Mrs. Parr. You should not judge me so hastily. I only meant to refer to the climate as preliminary to"

"Oh, then," she interrupted, brightening, "there are other considerations."

He inclined his head and smiled. "I shall always recall my stay at Ozark Post Office with pleasure," he rejoined, with a mental reservation, for he feared that it might possibly be with pain.

She saw that his speech lacked spontaneity, and guessed the cause, but he failed to note on her earnest face any evidence of sympathy. Assuming a more dignified and business like air, he inquired, "But how is your son? I understand he is home. I shall be delighted to meet him, little Rosa, Alice

OZARK POST OFFICE.

and Miss Parks. I trust they are all well.”

“‘Very,’” she rejoined. “‘They are not far off, and will be in presently; but what of the ‘mission’ you spoke of in your letter, Major? Have you made any discoveries? Remember, you are my confidential agent, and must confide in me alone.’”

The Major took a new lease of hope. “‘Certainly,’” he answered. “‘I shall not breathe a word concerning the matter to any one else.’”

A look of mutual understanding passed between them, and she moved her chair a little nearer, as if fearing that something might escape her. The Major was in ecstasy.

“‘And what are the results of your inquiries?’” she questioned, watching him narrowly.

“‘Very satisfactory, Mrs. Parr,’” said he, with the air of an experienced attor-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

ney. "I have taken the case, and have full power to settle up the estate."

"Then Alice is an heiress?" she said, as if agreeably surprised.

"Oh, yes, and quite wealthy."

Mrs. Parr unconsciously rose, stepped to a window that overlooked the valley, and presently, turning toward him, she inquired, "And the family, Major?"

"One of the oldest in New York."

For a time she seemed unable to conceal her emotion. Resuming her seat at his side said, in her inimitable way, the fatal expression creeping into her face, "My dear Major, how can I ever thank you enough for your kindness?"

"The thought that I have been of the least service to you, Mrs. Parr, affords me a satisfaction that makes the happiest period of my life." He spoke with much feeling, his eyes, meanwhile, fixed upon the floor.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“I’m so glad,” she remarked, presently, abruptly terminating the Major’s sentimental mood, without giving the least evidence of having been touched by it, “that things have turned out as they have. It will enable me to remove my objections to their marriage and let their little love affair take its own course. They can now meet on equal terms. I have reference to Walter and Alice,” she said, by way of explanation.

“It does seem to help the situation,” returned the Major, somewhat nettled to think that her thoughts evidently had no reference to himself. “Yes, in a matter of this kind it’s better for both to fully understand each other.”

“But how shall we manage it?” she broke out, after a moment’s reflection. “They must not be let into the secret at present.”

“Oh, you can attend to all of that,” he rejoined. “I will take my orders from

OZARK POST OFFICE.

you. In affairs of the heart women are equal to all emergencies."

He smiled, but she seemed not to notice him.

"Well," I must have time to think," she said, turning toward him with an air of business, "meanwhile, you must keep still. The girls are coming now," she went on, as voices were heard in the hall, "but the secret; oh, how shall I keep it."

As Miss Parks, Alice and Rosa entered the parlor, Major Chadwick rose to greet them. After the accustomed formalities Miss Parks inquired about Boston and Yankee land generally.

"Oh, everything is running along as usual," said the Major, facetiously; "she is still turning out the usual quantity of ethics and baked beans."

Alice joined in the laugh that followed the Major's remarks, and altogether the atmosphere was that of unrestrained merriment and good feeling. Mrs. Parr

OZARK POST OFFICE.

was in high spirits, a circumstance noticed by Alice, who attributed it all to the arrival of Major Chadwick. In this she was not altogether wrong. Presently Walter Parr arrived from the village and was introduced, after which supper was announced, and Mrs. Parr led the way to the dining room. Aunt Martha, who was aware of the Major's presence, but who had not met him since his return, was overjoyed to see him, and expressed her feelings in smiles and bows. She was aware of the Major's attachment for Mrs. Parr, and much regretted it, for she liked him and feared he would not be successful in his suit. "Nobody'll eber git Missis to marry 'em," she was in the habit of saying to Uncle Jerry, when some one of her many suitors would call. "She's tru Suthen, an' da neber 'gits in lub but onct."

Major Chadwick occupied the seat at Mrs. Parr's right, and Walter was seated

OZARK POST OFFICE.

opposite. "The Blue and the Gray," as Mrs. Parr remarked, "and I trust you will be good friends."

Each bowed and exchanged a look of cordial greeting.

"We are indebted, Walter," said Mrs. Parr, presently, "to Major Chadwick for many acts of kindness during your absence. I hardly know how we would have gotten along without him."

She glanced at Alice and little Rosa as she spoke, as if they emphasized the "we." The Major bowed and declared he had done no more than his duty. He did not enter the army to wage war on women and children. Walter Parr then thanked him for the courtesies he had shown his mother, and expressed the hope that they might become better acquainted.

"I trust we shall," rejoined the Major, who, apart from the consideration that he had taken a liking to the young man,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

was not averse to forming new associations that might tend to strengthen his social relations with the family.

Miss Parks and Alice sat opposite Walter, and Rosa was seated at his side. He seemed to have caught the infection from his mother and was in better spirits than usual. Alice and Miss Parks entered very little into the conversation, and little Rosa was an attentive listener. When the meal was finished all adjourned to the front porch to enjoy the cool of the evening. After dark they went into the parlor and Miss Parks and Alice played and sang till quite late, when Major Chadwick, bidding them all good night, took his departure for Deacon Riddle's house, where he had arranged to stop during his stay in the village. "Be sure and call at nine to-morrow, Major," said Mrs. Parr, as he lifted his hat to go.

XXI.

Oh, love is a dream that is
seldom fulfilled—
That charms till we wake, and the
spell is no more.
The dew on the rose that the night
has distilled,
Then vanishing leaving it forlorn
as before.

—*****—

PROMPTLY at nine o'clock next morning Major Chadwick called on Mrs. Parr. She received him in the library, and as their business was of a private nature no one else was present. Mrs. Parr's countenance wore an anxious look. She was the first to broach the subject which had called them together.

“And no one knows a word of this matter except ourselves, Major, I trust,” she asked.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“I haven’t breathed it to any living soul,” he answered gravely.

“Thanks,” she rejoined, brightening a little; “so far all is well. But I shall have to ask your advice how to proceed,” she added, “for I am really puzzled as to what is best to do.”

“I am at your service, Mrs. Parr,” he hastened to say, with an inclination of the head.

For a time both were silent. Then she observed, “It strikes me, Major, that it would be better for us to keep everything from Walter and Alice at present. I wish to test their affection for each other a little farther. Your discovery will afford me the opportunity to do so.”

“Knowing that you have the young lady’s welfare at heart, I shall acquiesce in whatever course you think best, Mrs. Parr,” he returned promptly.

By this time the young ladies had begun practicing their music in the parlor,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

and she rose and closed the door. Resuming her seat she inquired, "But tell me, Major, of the details of your investigation. What is the real status of Alice's family and fortune?"

"That is just what I wish to lay before you, Mrs. Parr," he replied, with a look of confidence becoming the situation. "I have made, with the assistance of a private notary, a very thorough investigation of the genealogy and standing of the young lady's ancestors on both sides and find them eminently respectable. The Gregg's are well represented in the army, in the professions and agriculture, and are mostly well to do. Colonel Charles Gregg, a retired physician, died about three years ago, leaving quite a large estate. There was supposed to be but one heir. John Gregg was known to have been killed at the outbreak of the war, and his wife and child were never heard of afterwards. Investigation has

OZARK POST OFFICE.

been instituted, however, with a view to their discovery, as the executors are anxious to settle up the estate. I am intrusted with this matter myself."

"And you found this all out, Major, without revealing your own knowledge of the Gregg's in this section," she questioned.

"Certainly. Am I not a lawyer?"

"Pardon me, Major. I do not question your ability," she rejoined, laughing in a way that served to break up the monotony and relieve the somewhat severe tension.

"And how did you manage to be appointed to look up the missing heirs?" she asked. "It must have required considerable diplomacy."

"Oh, no," he replied; "I simply called on one of the executors, ostensibly on other business, and during our conversation dropped a remark about having commanded a post in the Ozark country,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Missouri, during the war, when he immediately became interested and said he was about to dispatch an attorney for that section to look up a family by the name of Gregg. I then saw my opportunity, and said, “As I am about to return to Missouri to attend to some business of my own, I would be glad to serve you in this connection, if it would be agreeable, and besides being well acquainted in that part of the State, I might be more apt to find out what you wish to know than a stranger. Knowing me to be a lawyer and a person of some standing, from the letter of introduction I had presented on calling, he was delighted with my proposition and engaged me to attend to the case. So you see, Mrs. Parr, here I am and with full authority to confer with the heiress.”

“But you musn’t, just yet, Major,” she broke in pleasantly.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“Oh, no,” he said, “there’s no hurry. The young lady is being well cared for.”

“But how much is the fortune, Major?” she pressed, with a woman’s curiosity.

“About half a million to be divided between the heirs,” he replied.

“And how many heirs are there?” she questioned, with some show of anxiety.

“Only one in the East, a brother of Alice’s father, and I believe she is the only Gregg left of her branch of this family.”

“Then Alice will receive two hundred and fifty thousand dollars?”

“That is the sum,” he rejoined, with judicial dignity.

“Oh, Major, I am so glad,” she cried, assuming her most charming attitude and expression, “I don’t know how I can ever repay you for your kindness.”

“The knowledge of having served you satisfactorily, Mrs. Parr,” he replied,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

looking a little frustrated, "is all the reward I can ask."

"All this is very noble in you, Major," she said, then meditating for a moment she went on, "but I have not done with you yet, my friend, and you must continue to be my adviser."

"Nothing could afford me greater pleasure than to be near you, and I was about to say, Mrs. Parr, in any capacity."

For a moment her face wore a serious look, but she threw it off, changed the subject, and asked, "How long will you be in the village, Major?"

He stammered noticeably as he answered, "I don't know, Mrs. Parr, but I suppose I will have to remain until we get this matter settled, and that will depend on when you wish the case called."

He laughed as he said this, and she looked puzzled. "Very well," she replied, diplomatically, "We will get on as

OZARK POST OFFICE.

fast as we can. But I'm not inclined to hasten your departure.' ' Here her eye-lashes dropped upon her cheeks and she looked as though she was ready to throw herself upon his sympathy. Both were silent for a time. They had quite forgotten Alice, or at least the Major had, and was trying to make the best of his own case. When she lifted her eyes again it was to set them upon her late husband's picture. The Major's orbs were immediately turned in the same direction. For a time neither spoke. At last she recalled herself and observed, ' ' You know, Major, that I have always liked Alice. Indeed, she seems almost like my own daughter, and my only objection to my son's marrying her was on account of her social standing. But now all this is removed and a great load is lifted from my heart. ' ' "

The Major bowed sympathetically, and felt that a word, lightly spoken, might be

OZARK POST OFFICE.

of service in relieving himself in a similar manner, but it was not forthcoming. Yet he was far from miserable. To be alone with her under any circumstances was bliss unspeakable. They were sitting near a window, and noticing Uncle Jerry had driven up the carriage she remarked, "We have arranged for a short drive, Major, and have counted upon you as one of the company. Will you do us the honor?"

"I am at your service always, Mrs. Parr," he returned, bowing, "Command me at your pleasure."

The young ladies had already taken their seats in the carriage, and putting on her jaunty summer hat of white straw, she and Major Chadwick joined them. As it was a pleasant day and the roads were in good condition, the time passed delightfully. After visiting the post office, a circumstance that was never omitted on such occasions, they continued

OZARK POST OFFICE.

through the main street of the village, and struck into the country, passing on their way a number of fine farms and residences and coming at last to the village cemetery they all alighted for a stroll over the grounds. Up to this time Mrs. Parr was in the best of humor and the Major had never enjoyed her company more, but once in sight of her late husband's grave all was changed. Her spirits were crushed, and for a time she scarcely spoke. Presently the company separated and Miss Parks and Rosa went with Alice to visit her father's and mother's graves, and the Major accompanied Mrs. Parr to the last resting place of her deceased husband. The grounds were well kept and flowers were growing about the costly monument in great abundance. Thinking it becoming, and wishing to show his sympathy for the bereaved widow, Major Chadwick gathered a few stray roses and placed them on the stone.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

She noticed the act and smiled appreciatively, when her spirits began to revive. "You are always so thoughtful, Major," she murmured: "In this you remind me of Major Parr. He never seemed to have a thought of himself."

"You could not pay me a higher compliment, Mrs. Parr," he rejoined with much seriousness, "than to refer in this manner to my humble efforts to please you."

She smiled sadly, though he thought he detected a glow of sympathy in her face, but whether it was for himself or the one resting beneath the shaft, he was unable to decide. At this juncture the young ladies came back, when they all returned to the carriage and drove home. It was nearly midday when they reached the house and Walter Parr, who had gone to the village in the morning, was just returning. When they alighted, Mrs. Parr invited the Major to stay to lunch,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

but he begged to be excused as he had some letters to write and other matters to look after, but he would see her at any future time she might name. “Then come up this evening,” she said in her charming way, “for I must see all I can of you while you are here.”

XXII.

Lo! the great shall be small and
the small shall be great,
And the sage shall go out with
the children to play,
For a hand that's divine is directing
our fate,
And the right shall prevail and
the wrong—put away.

—*****—

THE presence of Major Chadwick in the village was made the subject of much gossip. Webber gave him a very flattering notice in the Clarion, expressing the hope that the Major would take up his permanent residence in the place, which he claimed to be an excellent field for investment. He was aware of the ex-post commander's attachment for the "widow," as Mrs. Parr was usually

OZARK POST OFFICE.

called, and on one occasion expressed his views to Deacon Riddle, who shook his head and replied, "No, Mrs. Parr will never marry again. She is a Rutherford, and they have always been peculiar in this respect. She is not of a re-marrying family. I'm sorry for the Major," he went on to say, "but it can't be helped. I reckon, though, he enjoys her company, and that's some consolation."

"Oh, you are getting old, Deacon," said Webber, "and maybe you are not good authority on such matters."

"Well," rejoined the Deacon, "I don't enjoy pulling a sled to the top of a hill, just to get to ride down on it as much as I once did. But you'll see I'm right in this thing."

During the day Major Chadwick had many callers. Captain Braithwait and Zeb Posey, his old scouts, spent an hour with him. Posey was at last free from

OZARK POST OFFICE.

the clutches of the revenue officers, for which he was indebted to Braithwait, who really had a liking for Posey's 'hand made' whiskey, as his friend was wont to call his output, had taken him in hand and set him up in the distilling business, so that his establishment was now running "straight," and everything was serene.

Webber was a light drinker, but as he had always brought the 'Archimedean lever' to Posey's relief when he was in trouble, he was never without a supply of the 'moonshine,' as he facetiously termed the spirits.

In the evening Major Chadwick went to the Parr mansion, according to previous appointment. The family were all at home and apparently in the best of spirits. After half an hour spent in general conversation, Mrs. Parr suggested that the young folks furnish some music, when they went into the parlor, leaving

OZARK POST OFFICE.

herself and Major Chadwick alone. Of course, this was the object she had in view when she made the suggestion.

When they were alone, Mrs. Parr said, ‘Now, Major, we must get to business. Please move your chair a little closer so that we will not be obliged to talk too loud.’

The Major obeyed, when she went on: ‘I have thought the matter over and decided upon a course of action, with your approval, of course,’ she added. ‘It is this: The arrangement will give me a little time to perfect matters without interfering with your duties as an attorney. Now, what I suggest is, that you go on and make your report to the executors of the estate, but keep the secret from every one until she is of age, which will not be until next May. You can delay things a little, Major; that’s a part of your profession, I believe.’ She showed some vivacity here, and he bowed

OZARK POST OFFICE.

in recognition of her wit. “Besides, you see,” she continued, “Alice has a good home and is in need of nothing. You might make this known to her relatives if you choose, more than this you can tell them why you wish to keep the young ladies’ good fortune from her for a time. You may think me selfish, Major, but mothers are so more or less. I have no other motive in this affair than the happiness of my son and the welfare of Alice. I need not tell you that we care nothing for her wealth, our income is sufficient.

“Capital idea,” rejoined the Major. “I shall proceed along the lines you have marked out.”

“Thanks,” she said smiling. “Come now,” she went on rising, “let us drop all this for the present and join the young ladies and Walter in the parlor. We can proceed further before you go away.”

OZARK POST OFFICE.

As the doors between the library and the parlor were open they had heard the music and enjoyed it very much, though to be sure their minds were much diverted by the consideration of more weighty matters. Yet the general effect was not lost. When they entered the room the Major remarked to Mrs. Parr in low tones, “What a charming scene. The very picture of a happy and contented home.”

“And you wouldn’t like to break it up, would you, Major?”

She spoke in her most charming manner and looked at him imploringly.

“Indeed I should not, Mrs. Parr.”

They were standing quite a distance from the others and their words were not audible to them.

“Yes,” she went on presently, “we are as happy as it is possible for mortals to be in this world of tribulation, for you know we have all suffered, and some of

OZARK POST OFFICE.

us at least must continue to suffer till the end."

The old sad look had stolen to her face and she seemed to be ready to sink to the floor for lack of strength. The Major looked perplexed but was helpless. While her every expression was a plea for sympathy, his former experiences had taught him lessons that he didn't care to have repeated, so he remained passive. He had long since come to the conclusion, that she was not to be won on the impulse of the moment, if she were to be won at all. In his desperation he had often been moved to declare himself and have done with the matter at once, yet he never could quite bring himself to it. At such moments she seemed to anticipate his thoughts and change her attitude towards him so as to frustrate his purpose.

Happily the selections for the evening had no reference to the late conflict.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Good taste, which was ever apparant in the Parr mansion dictated such a course. On a former occasion when ‘‘Dixey’’ had been played at the suggestion of Mrs. Parr, it was merely intended as a bit of good humored banter directed against Major Chadwick, such as any woman might take the liberty of doing with a gentleman with whom she was on friendly terms. Besides the contest was then at its height, and it was only natural that she should express her preference for the air under whose inspiration her husband and son marched to battle. But now all was over and two soldiers who had fought on different sides met under her roof as friends. When at length the young folks took occasion to rest for a few minutes, Major Chadwick and Mrs. Parr moved up and joined in the conversation. The Major complimented Miss Parks and Alice on their musical attainments and thanked Walter

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Parr for the pleasure he had derived from his singing, for in addition to turning the music he assisted the ladies with his fine barytone voice in some of the airs. As a result of her training Miss Parks' mind ran to the classical. Deacon Riddle, who had a fashion of saying when discussing the higher branches of education, in connection with his position as school director, "that too much culture unfitted a person for either earth or heaven," was inclined to make an exception in her case. Her services in the church choir, had been of inestimable value in creating among the younger people a taste for good music and an ambition to excel, at this, the highest of all the arts. Her superiority was recognized, and did much to soften the asperities which had so long existed between the two sections of the country. In addition to her many accomplishments, she possessed the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

real Yankee practicability and could adapt herself to the occasion, and make herself agreeable even to the illiterate. Her tact was unsurpassed. On one occasion when visiting a wealthy family of the neighborhood, one of the young ladies present who prided herself on her knowledge of music, after performing several selections most wretchedly, was complimented by all, Miss Parks among the rest, for her fine execution. Later when Miss Parks was requested to play she remarked to the young lady in question: "I do not play those airs just as you do, though I am not sure that your way is not the best. However, if you insist I will run through them. The result was that she not only convinced the other of her ignorance, but made her her friend. This same mode of procedure has since been practiced in the mountaineer districts among the poor with excellent results. Not only in

OZARK POST OFFICE.

music, but in housekeeping and more especially in cooking. These mountaineers are proverbial for their hospitality and to refuse to eat with them is an unpardonable insult. Missionaries, whose labors call them to those isolated sections, and who find it difficult to partake of the food set before them, have made excellent progress by adopting Miss Parks' tactics. They give out the impression at some cost to be sure, that they are very fond of the native's way of preparing dishes, and later make a request that they be permitted to show them how they do these things in their part of the country. By these means something for the betterment of their condition is accomplished, which could not have been attained by criticism.

At last Major Chadwick rose and thanking all for the delightful evening he had passed in their company prepared

OZARK POST OFFICE.

to go. Mrs. Parr accompanied him to the porch where they conversed for a time on matters connected with Alice. When the time came for parting she remarked in a confidential manner, "Well Major, as you leave for the East to-morrow we shall have to conduct this business by correspondence. Be sure and write often. I will keep you thoroughly posted concerning matters here. They were standing near each other when she spoke and he thought she looked a little depressed. When he lifted his hat and said "good-bye," she answered with a smile, "until we meet again."

XXIII.

—But when the moment came
to part
And he went forth
alone,
An inward flame illumed
his heart,
And then *her* image
shown—

—*****—

“**T**ILL we meet again.” The words rang through Major Chadwick’s brain as he walked leisurely along the public highway that led to Deacon Riddle’s house. “Strange world in which we live,” he mused; “we are indeed creatures of impressions. This little village, buried in the western wilds, hallowed by an association, rises in my mind as the one cherished spot on earth. To me, it is an holy shrine to which I cheerfully come to offer incense

OZARK POST OFFICE.

upon the altar of my goddess.” When he reached the house the family had all retired. He was glad of this for he was not in a talkative mood. For a time he lay on the bed thinking over his life for the past five years, a period which seemed to hedge in his real existence. The great world outside was as nothing to him now. All was centered here, and here rested his every hope. At last he dropped asleep. At breakfast the next morning he attempted to be cheerful though it was apparent to all that he was ill at ease. Something evidently weighed upon his mind. He was, in the language of Webber, under the pressure of some “overshadowing event.” Deacon Riddle shrewdly divined the cause of his discomforture and resolved, in the language of the immortal “J. N.” who was a frequent visitor at the village, to “lift the veil.” He knew the ex-post commander’s weakness and went direct

OZARK POST OFFICE.

to the point: "I reckon you had a pleasant visit at the Parr's last evening," he ventured. "Very indeed," rejoined the Major, brightening; "they are excellent people, and the young man,—Captain Parr, I believe was his rank in the Southern army,—seems to be a fine fellow."

"A chip of the old block," rejoined the Deacon, "his father was one of our best citizens."

"So I have heard," returned the Major a little depressed.

Mrs. Riddle, who sat at the head of the table looked over her glasses approvingly and the three young ladies exchanged confirmatory glances.

"And so you are going to leave us to-day Major, I understand," said Mrs. Riddle, as she handed him his coffee.

"Yes," he answered, "but I shall be back again next season to settle up some unfinished business."

OZARK POST OFFICE.

An oppressive silence followed and the entire family, except the Deacon, looked confused. They imagined the event would come off sooner. Deacon Riddle, however, held to his old views and didn't think it would come off at all, and so expressed himself to his wife and daughters later on.

“I have been retained,” continued Major Chadwick, presently, “to attend to some law business for a gentleman in New York, and this will necessitate my return sooner or later.”

This frank declaration on the part of Major Chadwick, put affairs in an entirely different light, and there was another significant silence, and more glances. There was more conversation on general topics when the meal being completed the company broke up.

After breakfast Major Chadwick walked over to the post office with Deacon Riddle, and on his way met a

OZARK POST OFFICE.

number of old friends. Among them Capt. Braithwait, Zeb Posey and Webber. Presently the editor drew from his side pocket his blank pad and after noting the fact that Major Chadwick would return East that evening, went to his office. Capt. Braithwait then excused himself to Posey, and calling his late superior officer aside, quietly inquired, "I understand, Major, that you knew Miss Parks in Boston?"

"Very well," was the rejoinder; "I am an old friend of the family, and secured for her the place with Mrs. Parr."

"Came of good stock, Major," pursued the ex-scout.

"None better," said the other.

"Well, I like her singing, Major," continued Braithwait, "and just wanted to inquire who she was, that's all."

They now walked back to where Posey was standing, when he drew from a

OZARK POST OFFICE.

pocket a pint bottle and handing it to Major Chadwick requested him to take it, as he would find it handy on the train.

“Is this moonshine, Zeb?” inquired the Major, smiling.

“No, Major, that’s straight, tax paid on it and everything regular.”

“Thanks,” returned Major Chadwick as he placed the flask in his side pocket, “I shall drink to your good health.”

Presently the North bound train came along and Major Chadwick stepped aboard. In a few minutes he saw the Parr mansion standing on the elevation to the left. Gazing at it intently until it receded from view, he settled into his seat and murmured “till we meet again.”

He next gave himself up to reviewing the events of the past two days to settle in his mind, if possible, the real status of affairs between himself and Mrs.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Parr. He recalled their meetings, partings and their conversations, but found nothing in them that he could construe to indicate that her feeling toward him had undergone any change. She simply liked him as a friend, but had she not other gentlemen friends whom she treated equally well, and whose company she seemed to enjoy as much as his own. “No, he reasoned, there is no change.” I am no more to her now than I was a year ago. The secret that is between us is simply a business affair, and her every action showed that she regarded it as such. “And yet,” he ruminated on, “I suppose I must serve her nor ask why.”

Major Chadwick went direct to New York and made his report to the executors of the estate. He laid the whole matter before them, including Mrs. Parr's request for temporary delay in informing Alice of her good fortune.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

As nothing could be done until she was of age there could be no objection raised to this, and so matters were permitted to take their course.

Major Chadwick lost no time in informing Mrs. Parr of his success in securing the executor's consent to her wishes. He received a reply without delay. The stationery, chirography, diction and punctuation were perfect. It began, "My dear Major," and as the missive was quite lengthy it embraced all her moods, and for the moment he seemed to sit in her very presence.

After rereading the letter several times, he placed it in his pocket, and murmured inwardly, "Well, she has taken me into her confidence anyhow, and that's something."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Parr was not idle. As already stated she had no objections to her son marrying Alice except from a social point of view, but now that all

OZARK POST OFFICE.

impediments were removed she felt that a great load had been lifted from her heart and she cheerfully set herself to the task of bringing affairs, if possible, to a successful conclusion. She knew that her son loved Alice, but she was not sure the young lady returned his passion. So she resolved to know the truth. One evening after returning from their accustomed drive, she called Alice into the library and said: "Alice, I wish to talk to you confidentially; I have heretofore opposed the marriage between my son and yourself because of the difference in your social positions. This you could not blame me for. With all my love for you this objection would still remain, were it not that I have come into possession of facts concerning your family which convince me that I have been mistaken. You have simply been made a victim of circumstances beyond your own control and are not what the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

people of Ozark Post Office imagine you to be—the daughter of a pauper.’’ Though the ordeal was trying Alice maintained her self-possession, and after a momentary pause Mrs. Parr continued: ‘‘What I am saying to you is not known to a soul this side of New York, your former home, and I trust you will keep it all to yourself for the present; I have a reason for this. My son thinks you poor and without friends in the world. He loves you for yourself alone. He is mistaken—you are rich in your own right and in every way his equal.’’ As she uttered these words, Alice buried her face in Mrs. Parr’s lap and wept as though her heart would break. When she had grown calmer, Mrs. Parr went on. ‘‘Now, Alice, you know all. The affair between yourself and my son you can manage between you. I shall not let him know anything about your changed fortune for the present and

OZARK POST OFFICE.

I hope you will keep your own counsel.
You could not come into possession of
anything till you are of age, and
besides you are not in need."

XXIV.

He saw all else receding,
felt
All passing into nothing
melt,
In which her image had not
dwelt,
And as a slave beside her
knelt.

—*****—

When Walter Parr came home in the evening he was sure that he had never seen Alice look so beautiful. It also occurred to him that she seemed less reserved and reticent in his presence than formerly, a circumstance which he mentioned to his mother who remarked that she supposed it was all owing to something she had said to Alice a few hours before.

“And what was it mamma?” questioned her son.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“‘Would you like to know?’” she inquired teasingly.

“‘Yes, anything that concerns her is of interest to me,’” he declared.

“‘Well, I informed her, Walter, that I should no longer object to your marriage.’”

“‘Thanks, mamma, but I haven’t her consent yet.’”

“‘O, well, it wouldn’t become me to intercede for you in an affair of this kind; you must win her for yourself or learn to live without her.’”

The conversation was held in the library, and the young ladies were assembled on the porch enjoying the cool evening breeze. Mrs. Parr and her son now joined them.

Miss Parks had just returned from a drive with Capt. Braithwait and was in the best of humor. He had taken her out to his fine farm a couple of miles distant,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

and showed her some of his possessions, though he had others elsewhere. "What do you think of him, Agnes?" inquired Mrs. Parr, with a smile.

"O, I'd like him better if he'd only talk more, he is so reticent," she said laughing.

"I imagine he'd not ask you to do a thing more than once if you were his wife," Mrs. Parr went on, still smiling.

"Well, I wouldn't mind obeying one who is competent to command," she rejoined complacently.

"You need have no fears, on that score," threw in Mrs. Parr, "he's a good manager."

"But dear me," said Miss Parks, "we have not yet been acquainted three months, and he certainly hasn't proposed."

Walter Parr and Alice were interested listeners, and little Rosa drank in every word. Aunt Martha, who was waiting

OZARK POST OFFICE.

an opportunity to announce supper also overheard the conversation, and later in the evening took occasion to inform Miss Parks that "Captain Braithwait is a mighty fine gemman', an' rich, too," she declared with emphasis. "Yo' git him fo' a husbun, Miss Agnes, an' yo' won't hab to te'ch any mo music, I tell yo' hunny.'"

"O, then you know the Captain, do you Auntie," said Miss Parks.

"Knowed him chil', knowed his mamma 'fo' he was bo'n. Ol' Squire Braithwait was his daddy. He git his Indian blood from his mammy an' she was three foudswhite. Her grandfahder da say was a Indian chief. Mighty fine fo'ks I tell yo'."

"Thanks, Auntie," said Miss Parks, "when I'm married, you shall be at the wedding, but there's nothing of it yet."

The monthly instalment of current literature had arrived that day and the

OZARK POST OFFICE.

evening was spent in reading. Alice was occupied with a volume of Tennyson, that Walter Parr had purchased for her in St. Louis, a few days before and had just finished Lady Clare. Noticing the head lines he asked her what she thought of the poem. "It is very touching," she rejoined thoughtfully, "but it seems to me it would be better were she the real Lady Clare. As it is, she is too much overshadowed by her lover's generosity."

"But he makes her Lady Clare," said Walter Parr, with spirit, "and the situation afforded him the opportunity to prove his love."

"Pretty in a story," she said, still looking serious, "but it places her at a disadvantage at the start, with little possibility of her ever emerging from her real position, I think," she went on laughing a little, "that she should have refused him."

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Would you have done so," he asked somewhat discomfited at the turn things were taking.

"Most assuredly, I shall never marry above my station."

"Perhaps you are right," acquiesced Walter, with an effort to look cheerful.

His mother who was sitting near overheard the conversation, but was not disturbed by it. "If Walter only knew all," she mused, "but he will learn in time."

For the next several months, which embraced the fall and winter season, things went on as usual at Ozark Post Office. There were the accustomary social events in the neighborhood together with sleigh riding and skating, and an occasional visit was made to St. Louis for the purpose of attending the theatres, when plays of merit were announced. On these occasions, the family always stopped at the Planter's house,

OZARK POST OFFICE.

where they were well-known, and the announcement in the papers that they were in the city was always sure to result in a large number of callers from among the old and wealthy class of citizens. Even when coming to town for a day's shopping they made this aristocratic hostelry their headquarters. When spring came there was noticeable an increased growth of grass in the main street of the village, a circumstance which attracted the attention of Webber who commented upon it in the Clarion as an evidence of business decline. Pointing out the situation to Deacon Riddle one day, the Deacon observed: "You must have patience my friend, all will come round right in time."

"But I haven't an income sufficient to keep me going, Deacon. I am engaged in the poorest business in the world, with possibly one exception," chuckling

OZARK POST OFFICE.

inwardly as he felt the humorous side of his nature assert itself.

“And what is that,” inquired the Deacon.

“Trying to sell a watermelon after frost.”

They both laughed, and after negotiating a small loan from the Deacon, Webber returned to his office with a renewed determination to pull the Clarion through or perish in the attempt. “Excelsior is the word,” he cried for the hundredth time.

At last the school season drew near its close and the commencement day on which Alice was to graduate was at hand. She had already passed her eighteenth birthday, and Major Chadwick had returned from the East to settle up the estate. The secret had been well kept. When the hour approached Alice appeared to read her graduating essay. She was clad in pure white and

OZARK POST OFFICE.

was perfectly calm and composed. Her beauty and graceful deportment was the subject of general comment. And above all she possessed that ease and grace which comes of conscious ability and elevated purpose. The elite of the village were in attendance, and Walter Parr sat by the side of his mother, Miss Parks and Rose holding a large bouquet of flowers. Major Chadwick was also present. Alice read her composition, which she called "A Story of the War," in a calm, clear voice. Every word was distinct. It was not lengthy, but simple and to the point. It began: "There was a young lawyer of good family and education, who left his home in New York a year before the breaking out of the great civil war and settled in a Western village. He was married and had one child, a daughter, at the time, aged ten years. His object was to carve out a career for himself by means of his

OZARK POST OFFICE.

profession, and as soon as he had secured a sufficient income to assure their support, to send for his wife and child to join him.” “That’s the story of her father,” whispered Captain Leavenworth to his wife and daughter, who sat beside him. He was perceptibly agitated. “Having progressed sufficiently he at length wrote for them to come. They obeyed the summons. On reaching their destination they were informed that the husband and father had been slain an hour before by a mob for refusing to deny his country and his flag, and that at that moment his remains were smoldering in the ruins of the burned building in which he had his office.” Major Braithwait who was present and sitting by the side of Miss Parks whispered, “That’s all true, I was at his side when he fell.” The entire audience was becoming interested, and Mrs. Parr and Walter glanced at each other. “The

OZARK POST OFFICE.

mother, on learning of the death of her husband lost her mind, and for a period of three years was an inmate of the poor house. Wandering away from her place of abode she died one night in the mountains during a terrible storm.”

The stillness here was oppressive, and many exchanged significant glances.

“The daughter was cared for by a noble lady of wealth and position, who gave her all the advantages of a refined home, and educated her as though she were her own child. At eighteen she graduated, and on the same day, came into possession of a fortune of a quarter of a million dollars in her own right, together with the assurance that her family was one of eminent respectability.”

Here the audience broke into applause and Major Chadwick rose to his feet. When order was restored, he said: “Ladies and gentlemen, the story is every word true; I am here in the inter-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

est of the executors of the estate and have just transferred to the young lady the amount named.”

Here Alice bowed to leave the stage when Walter Parr advanced and presented her with the flowers. She thanked him, and retired.

XXV.

Shall the lover come to his own
at last,
And love prove stronger than
birth or pride?
Ah, fate shall decide at the
final cast—
And who shall put her decrees
aside.

—*****—

IT was a happy night at the Parr mansion. Miss Parks was delighted with Alice's good fortune, and still more with her own, for Captain Braithwait had proposed to her on their way home from the graduating exercises and been accepted, though she managed to keep her secret. Major Chadwick's revelation was the talk of the village. Webber was wrought to a high pitch of enthusiasm, and rushing to the post office

OZARK POST OFFICE.

remarked to Deacon Riddle: "Have I ever written anything as improbable as this true story of Alice Gregg?"

"Probably not," acknowledged the Deacon. "Most anything can happen these times."

"After all this you wouldn't be surprised, would you, to hear of the widow's marriage?"

"Yes, I would; she'll never change her mind; did you ever notice that she never refers to Major Parr as being dead, but always as if he were a living, vital presence?"

"I have, though it never occurred to me in that light before," said Webber, making a note of the idea. He always jotted everything down that he thought might be turned to use in a literary way in the future. "Well," he went on gathering his exchanges to depart, "all this justifies my record and contradicts the assertion that I am a writer of impos-

OZARK POST OFFICE.

sible stories, as you have been accustomed to call my 'Weekly Effusions.' "

"O, you're all right," rejoined the Deacon, good humoredly, "your record is good, but remember young man you can't live on it. Your memory may, but memories don't require any victuals or clothes."

When the editor reached his office he found Captain Braithwait waiting his arrival. They shook hands when the Captain said in his quiet way: "There will soon occur in the neighborhood a little social event, if I may so call it, that will naturally furnish an item for your paper. See that the affair is properly laid before the community. You will understand what I mean in due course of time." Then drawing a roll of crisp bills from his pocket, he continued: "Here's something to pay you for your trouble."

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“A hundred dollar treasury note,” cried Webber, in astonishment, “why Captain you take away my breath; its the largest sum I have ever possessed at one time. But I trust I may be enabled to give you *quid pro quo*. At all events command the columns of the Clarion at any time. I say this without reserve because I know that you never want anything that isn’t square and right.”

He ruminated for a moment and then ventured: “Is Posey in trouble again, Captain?”

“O, no, he’s all right, nothing of that kind; if you will promise to keep the secret, I’ll tell you.”

“Captain, haven’t you often trusted me,” here Webber, broke into a laugh as his remark recalled the fact that the Captain had often accommodated him with small loans, that were still unpaid. Captain Braithwait smiled, and moving

OZARK POST OFFICE.

his chair a little closer to the editor whispered: "I'm going to get married."

"Don't say another word, Captain," rejoined Webber, in confidential tones, "I know who it is, and she's a prize. I knew when I first set eyes on that girl that she'd never go back to Boston single."

At this juncture Captain Braithwait rose to go. Webber accompanied him to the door and as they parted, he said: "It does look like prosperity is at last coming to Ozark Post Office."

As may be imagined, Alice received many congratulations on her good fortune. Walter Parr was the first to express his joy, adding in conclusion, "my only regret is, that we are to lose your society, Alice, but I trust you will not think me selfish. If it is for your good I shall try and bear it."

His manner was serious and he spoke with feeling. She did not reply at once.

OZARK POST OFFICE.

Presently she asked, "Do you wish me to stay?"

"Yes," he answered, "though I have no right to say so now since I can no longer be of service to you."

"Are you sure of that?" she continued, brightening a little,

"No," he replied, "but I have my fears."

There was a moments silence when she said: "Walter"—she had always called him Mr. Parr before—"do you remember that I once said to you that I would never marry above my station."

"I do, Alice, and it was a sad blow to me then, for I supposed you intended the remark for me."

"I did," she returned, feelingly, "but not in the light you understood it. I knew then, as your mother will tell you, that this barrier had already been removed."

OZARK POST OFFICE.

“O, Alice,” he cried, rising to his feet and moving towards her, “do you mean it?”

“Yes,” she answered.

“And will you be mine,” he pleaded taking her hands in his own.

“I have never loved anyone else,” she rejoined.

He stood for a moment as if dazed; then bent as though to imprint a kiss upon her brow, but she drew back and said with a smile that recalled him, “not till after we are married, Walter.”

Major Chadwick, having fulfilled his mission as far as the Gregg estate was concerned, spent the evening in conversation with Mrs. Parr. At last bidding her good bye, he left, to take East bound train.

He had proceeded but a short distance, when glancing back, he noticed, through the parlor window, which was open, Mrs. Parr sitting in a chair, and gazing

OZARK POST OFFICE.

sadly at her husband's picture on the wall. He paused for a moment to contemplate the scene and then walking away with bowed head, he muttered to himself: "He is to her a beautiful memory. Perhaps she will never be anything more to me, and yet I would not exchange her image, which I wear in my heart for the love of any other woman in the world."

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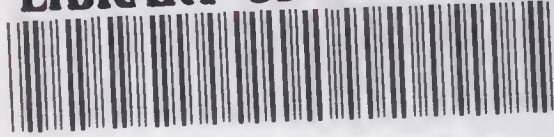
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